 Violence in schools has been misconstrued.

- **Violence in schools is not a new problem.** Reports of student violence can be found throughout American history. Congressional inquiries over a perceived increase in youth violence in schools can be found in every decade since the 1950s (e.g., Bayh, 1975; Crews & Counts, 1997). *School safety and order* should be recognized as an ongoing concern that deserves more systematic and sustained attention, and reliance on evidence-based practices rather than sporadic, crisis-driven responses to high profile incidents (Cornell & Mayer, 2010). Research suggests that we should develop a long-term strategic plan for school safety.

- **Highly publicized shootings generate premature claims of false trends.** For example, after the 2006 Amish school shooting, there were reports of a “new trend of adults killing children in schools” (Thomas, 2006) and “a pattern of rural school shootings” with “girls as targets” (Chaddock & Clayton, 2006). False trends generate unwarranted fears and overreactions (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010).

- **Although severe violence at school is an important concern, student homicides are far more frequent outside of school than at school.** For example (Figure 1), in 2004-05 there were 21 student homicides at school, but 1,513 not at school. (Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, & Snyder, 2009).

- **Serious violence in schools has actually declined.** As shown in Figure 2, student reports of both violent crimes and thefts have declined substantially since the early 1990s (Dinkes, Kemp, Baum, & Snyder, 2009). Other studies using different information sources show comparable trends.

- **The most common forms of student aggression in schools are bullying and disruptive behavior.** More attention should be given to reducing bullying and maintaining order, which in turn may have a preventive effect on the less common, extreme cases of violence.
References


