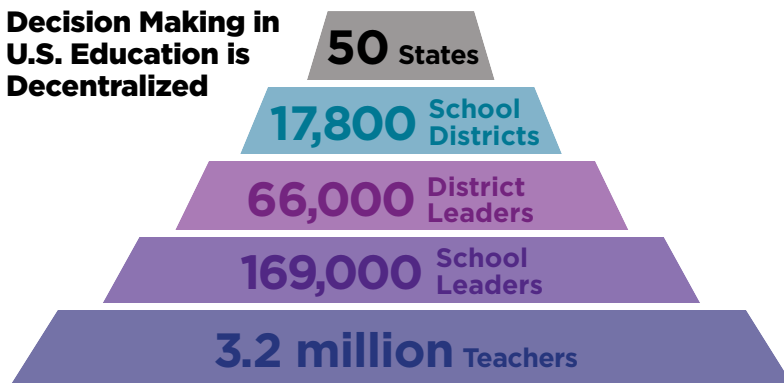


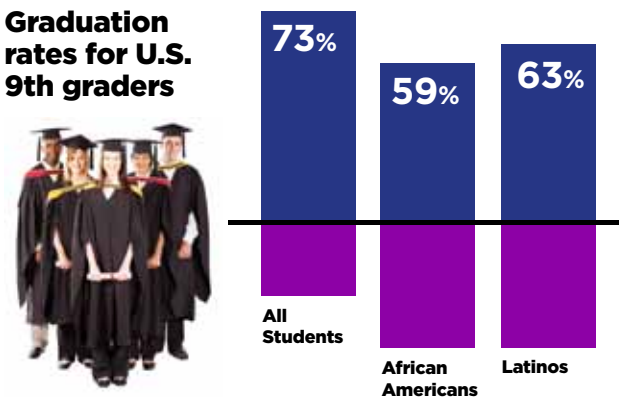
**True or false:** The U.S. education system is highly centralized at the federal level with consistent standards and assessments across states.

Many would probably answer “True.” But a snapshot of American schools shows a very different picture. K-12 education is diffuse and decentralized. Local school boards and state governments play more prominent roles than the federal government. Academic expectations historically have varied widely from state to state making it virtually impossible to compare results.

**Decision Making in U.S. Education is Decentralized**



**Graduation rates for U.S. 9th graders**



**The Numbers**

As of 2009, the public K-12 system included more than 17,800 districts educating more than 49 million students, about 16% of U.S. population.<sup>1</sup> The country’s education system is far more diverse than the overall population.

One challenge with such a large and diverse student population is ensuring all have access to the academic content and skills they need to be able to graduate and pursue the career of their choice.

**Graduation Rates**

About 73% of students who enter high school graduate within four years, but only about 60% of African American and Latino students earn a diploma within four years.<sup>2</sup> In 2010, 38% of Americans had attained at least an associate’s degree or higher.<sup>3</sup>

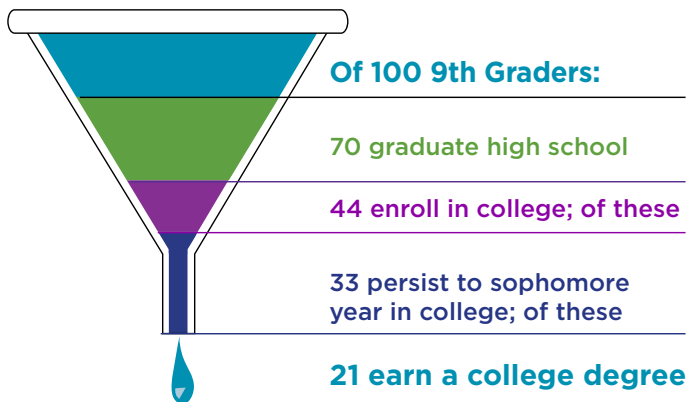
## The Cost of Education

The U.S. Department of Education, which has a budget of about \$70 billion, covers only about 10% of overall K-12 public school funding. The remaining 90% comes primarily from state and local governments, with some support coming from private sources.

### State Education Spending

In 2010-11, about \$10,500 was spent per child on K-12 public school instruction (which doesn't cover other administrative costs, such as transportation, school lunches or supplemental services, which can increase the per-pupil estimate significantly). As is the case with most facets of the U.S. education system, major differences in funding levels persist across states.

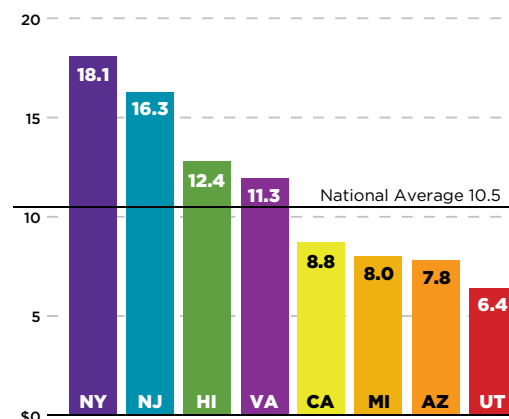
### The Shrinking Supply of U.S. College Graduates



Source: National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

### Highest and Lowest Education Spending Per Pupil in 2010-11

(in \$ thousands)



Source: NEA Research. Ranking and Estimates: Ranking of the States 2010 and Estimates of School Statistics 2011.

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data 2008-09; U.S. Census Website

<sup>2</sup> Education Week (2012). Graduation in the United States. <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2012/Graduation-in-the-US-table.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2010

