Abstract
This report reviews the state of secondary education in the United States by first summarizing the development of American high schools from the early 1800s through 2007. The report captures highlights of 21st century reform efforts, including a brief introduction to reform leaders in foundations and government. Following data about high school participation is a review of high school reform issues. The report presents summaries of high school reform models and strategies for improving the delivery of secondary education. It concludes with an overview of federal and state policies that aim to stimulate improvement in high schools and recommendations for continued progress.
Education in the United States is provided in public, private, and home schools. State governments set overall educational standards, often mandate standardized tests for K–12 public school systems and supervise, usually through a board of regents, state colleges, and universities. The bulk of the $1.3 trillion in funding comes from state and local governments, with federal funding accounting for only about $200 billion. Private schools are generally free to determine their own curriculum and staffing. Post-secondary education, better known as “college” in the United States, is generally governed separately from the elementary and high school system, and is described in a separate section below. Preschool. There are no mandatory public prekindergarten or crèche programs in the United States. The federal government funds the Head Start preschool program for children of low-income families, but most families are responsible for finding preschool or childcare. In the large cities, there are sometimes preschools catering to the children of the wealthy. Because some wealthy families see