The Strengths of American Education

Despite its many problems, the successes of the American public school system in the first half of the [twentieth] century impressed other industrial nations, who saw the economic value of universal education and exerted themselves to catch up. The American school systems' readiness to meet the challenge of numbers and to provide social mobility to low-income students was truly remarkable; its efforts to assimilate newcomers into American society were largely successful. Illiteracy declined sharply during these years, and educational attainment rose steadily. These were the enduring accomplishments of the American public school.

The American education system has also been affected by religious beliefs of families. When Irish Catholics came to the United States, they didn't always feel comfortable in schools that had been formed by those with more of a Protestant background. So, many schools run by Catholics were developed.

The educational system continues to be affected by concerns of people in the United States. Some concerns include providing equal educational opportunity for girls, minority children and disabled children. As a result of these concerns and resulting legislative action, girls are now allowed to participate more fully in sports, have greater opportunity (and encouragement) to take science and math courses, and are able to participate in activities that go beyond the stereotype of what girls should do (e.g., only being homemakers, secretaries, nurses, etc.). Children who aren't white now face less segregation in schools than they used to. Disabled children now have more educational resources made available to them than they have had in the past.