

### 3. FAMILY AND SCHOOL STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF IEP AND TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESSES

This chapter describes the perceptions of families and school staff regarding the transition planning process for secondary school students with disabilities. Specifically, it highlights:

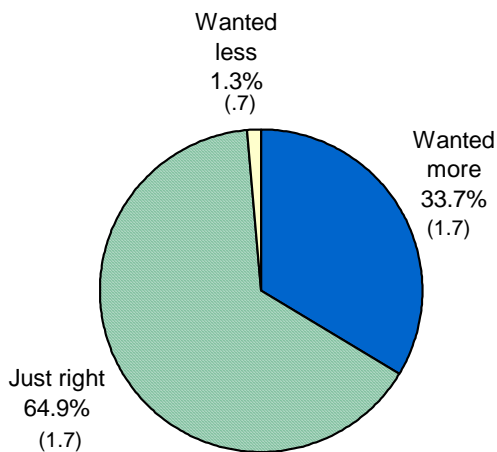
- Parents’ perceptions of the decision-making of students, parents, and school staff in the transition planning process.
- Parents’ perceptions of how useful transition planning has been in helping their sons and daughters prepare for life after school.
- School staff’s perceptions of how well suited students’ programs are for preparing them to achieve their transition goals.
- School staff’s perceptions of how much progress students are making toward their transition goals.

Information is drawn from two sources: parent interviews conducted in 2001, when children were ages 13 through 17, and the NLTS2 student’s school program survey, which was completed in the 2001-02 school year by the school staff who were most knowledgeable about the overall school programs of NLTS2 sample members. Sample members at the time of the school survey were ages 14 to 18. Findings are presented for students with disabilities as a whole and, when significant, for students who differ in their primary disability category and selected demographic characteristics.

#### Perceptions of Decision-Making in Transition Planning

The majority of students with disabilities (65%) have parents who report that their involvement in decisions concerning their son’s or daughter’s transition planning is “just about the right amount” when asked, “How do you feel about your family’s involvement in the decisions about [youth’s] IEP and transition plan?” (Exhibit 3-1). Few students have parents who want less involvement in transition planning, but one in three students with disabilities have parents who report they would like to be more involved in the process.

**Exhibit 3-1**  
**PARENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE IEP PROCESS**

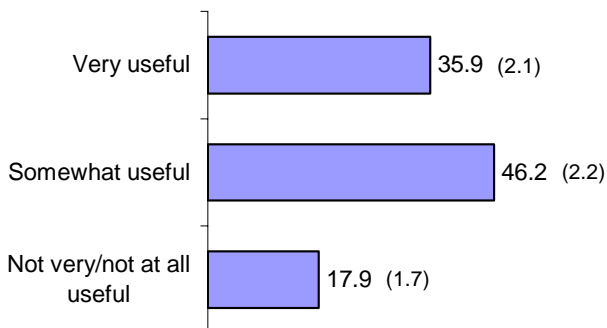


Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.  
Standard errors are in parentheses.

Parents also were asked, “How useful has the transition planning been in helping [youth] prepare for life after high school?” Although the vast majority of students were still in high school at the time of the NLTS2 parent interview and, therefore, parents were reporting about an ongoing process, 36% of students’ parents report that the transition planning process has been “very useful” in preparing youth for life after school; another 46% report the process has been “somewhat useful” (Exhibit 3-2).

However, parents of 18% of students report the transition planning experience to be “not

**Exhibit 3-2  
PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF USEFULNESS OF  
PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**



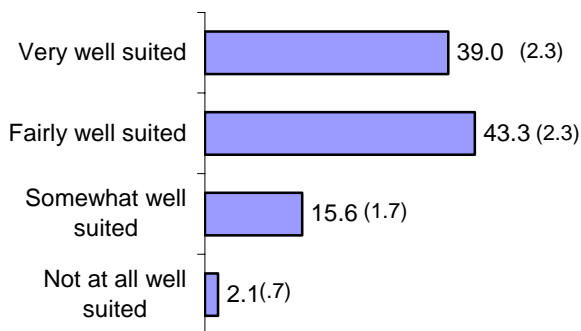
Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 student's school program surveys.  
Standard errors are in parentheses.

very useful” or “not at all useful” in preparing students for postschool life. These findings are considerably more positive than the responses of a national random sample of parents of approximately 500 high school students with disabilities who were interviewed in 2002 regarding their children’s school programs; 45% of those parents reported “their child’s special education program is ‘failing’ or ‘needs

improvement’ when it comes to preparing them for life in the real world after high school” (Johnson & Duffett, 2002).

Like parents, school staff report mixed views regarding the suitability of students’ school programs for helping them meet their transition goals. School staff report that somewhat more than one-third (39%) of students have an educational program that is “very well suited” for preparing students to achieve their transition goals, and they report that 43% have programs that are “fairly well suited” for this purpose (Exhibit 3-3). For almost one in five students, however, school staff are less convinced about the suitability of students’ school programs for preparing them to achieve their transition goals: The school programs of 16% of students with disabilities are reported to be only “somewhat suitable,” and the programs of 2% of students with disabilities are reported to be “not at all suitable.”

**Exhibit 3-3  
SCHOOL STAFFS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE SUITABILITY OF  
STUDENT'S PROGRAMS TO ACHIEVE TRANSITION GOALS**



Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 student's school program surveys.  
Note: Includes only students with transition planning.  
Standard errors are in parentheses.

## Disability Differences in Perceptions of the IEP and Transition Planning Processes

Although about two-thirds of students with disabilities have parents who report satisfaction with their level of involvement in their son’s or daughter’s transition planning process, significant differences are associated with the student’s disability category (Exhibit 3-4). Youth with hearing or visual impairments, traumatic brain injuries, or deaf-blindness are the most likely to have parents who report being content with their level of involvement in this process; more than 70% do so. In contrast, youth with mental retardation or emotional disturbances have parents who are the least likely to accept their current level of involvement (58% and 61%, respectively,  $p < .01$  comparing youth with emotional disturbances and hearing impairments).

**Exhibit 3-4**  
**PARENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN AND THE USEFULNESS OF**  
**TRANSITION PLANNING, BY DISABILITY CATEGORY**

	Speech/ Learning Dis- ability	Language Impair- ment	Mental Retar- dation	Emo- tional Distur- bance	Hearing Impair- ment	Visual Impair- ment	Ortho- pedic Impair- ment	Other Health Impair- ment	Autism	Trau- matic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabili- ties	Deaf- Blind- ness
<b>Percentage with parents who report they:</b>												
Want more involve- ment in the IEP and transition planning process	32.3 (2.6)	33.5 (2.8)	40.1 (2.7)	37.4 (2.7)	26.4 (2.7)	26.9 (3.3)	29.3 (2.7)	33.1 (2.4)	34.9 (2.6)	28.8 (4.3)	30.2 (2.6)	24.2 (4.8)
Have the right amount of involve- ment	66.4 (2.6)	65.7 (2.8)	58.5 (2.7)	60.6 (2.8)	71.6 (2.8)	72.5 (3.3)	69.3 (2.7)	66.0 (2.4)	63.9 (2.7)	70.8 (4.3)	68.9 (2.6)	73.6 (4.9)
<b>Percentage with parents who report transition planning is:</b>												
Very useful	34.8 (3.2)	45.0 (3.9)	43.1 (3.3)	34.1 (3.4)	41.4 (3.7)	39.4 (4.5)	30.8 (3.6)	30.2 (3.0)	28.1 (3.4)	37.6 (5.9)	37.5 (3.7)	37.4 (7.1)
Somewhat useful	47.2 (3.3)	40.8 (3.8)	48.1 (3.4)	40.6 (3.5)	40.0 (3.6)	46.1 (4.6)	48.3 (3.9)	45.0 (3.3)	48.4 (3.8)	44.0 (6.0)	41.0 (3.8)	40.8 (7.2)
Not very/not at all useful	18.0 (2.6)	14.2 (2.7)	8.7 (1.9)	25.3 (3.1)	18.6 (2.9)	14.4 (3.2)	20.9 (3.2)	24.9 (2.9)	23.5 (3.2)	18.5 (4.7)	21.5 (3.2)	21.8 (6.1)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.  
Standard errors are in parentheses.

Even though parents of youth with mental retardation may express the desire for more involvement, they join parents of students with speech or hearing impairments as being the most likely to report that the transition planning process has been “very useful” in preparing their sons or daughters for life after school (41% to 45%). In contrast, the usefulness of the schools’ transition planning for life after school is rated less highly by parents of students with autism, other health impairments, or emotional disturbances; about one-fourth of these students’ parents report transition planning has been “not very” or “not at all useful.”

Variations in the perceptions of school staff regarding the suitability of the students' school programs to prepare students to achieve their transition goals are similar to those for parents' opinions (Exhibit 3-5). For example, students with emotional disturbances are less likely to have school programs that are rated as "very well suited" for meeting their transition goals (33%) than students in other categories, especially students with hearing or visual impairments (50% and 52% respectively,  $p < .01$ ). School staff report that one in four students with emotional disturbances have school programs that are only "somewhat" or "not at all well suited" to prepare these youth to achieve their transition goals.

**Exhibit 3-5**  
**SCHOOL STAFFS' PERCEPTIONS OF SUITABILITY OF PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE**  
**TRANSITION GOALS, BY DISABILITY CATEGORY**

	Speech/ Learning Dis- ability	Language Impair- ment	Mental Retar- dation	Emo- tional Distur- bance	Hearing Impair- ment	Visual Impair- ment	Ortho- pedic Impair- ment	Other Health Impair- ment	Autism	Trau- matic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabili- ties	Deaf- Blind- ness
<b>Percentage with suitability of educational program for meeting transition goals:</b>												
Very well suited	39.6 (3.4)	48.9 (4.1)	38.8 (3.5)	32.6 (4.3)	49.5 (4.3)	52.1 (5.4)	38.3 (3.9)	43.9 (3.5)	45.2 (3.8)	38.7 (6.7)	39.8 (4.1)	40.5 (6.9)
Fairly well suited	44.2 (3.5)	42.7 (4.2)	41.9 (3.5)	43.1 (4.5)	39.2 (4.2)	35.2 (5.1)	43.3 (4.0)	39.2 (3.4)	36.6 (3.6)	51.9 (6.9)	41.2 (4.2)	46.7 (7.0)
Somewhat well suited	14.6 (2.5)	16.5 (3.1)	16.8 (2.7)	20.5 (3.7)	10.7 (2.7)	11.4 (3.4)	16.3 (3.0)	14.3 (2.5)	17.1 (2.8)	9.0 (3.9)	18.1 (3.3)	12.9 (4.7)
Not at all well suited	1.6 (.9)	1.9 (1.1)	3.5 (1.3)	3.8 (1.7)	.6 (.6)	1.2 (1.2)	2.1 (1.2)	2.6 (1.1)	1.0 (.8)	0.4 (.9)	.9 (.8)	—

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 student's school program surveys.

Note: Includes only students with transition planning.

– Too few to report separately.

Standard errors are in parentheses.

### Demographic Differences in Perceptions of Transition Planning

The perceptions of parents and school staff do not differ about transition planning for youth of different age or gender. However, NLTS2 analyses have demonstrated significant differences in several aspects of the school programs of students with disabilities who differ in household income levels and in racial/ethnic backgrounds (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Levine, & Marder, 2003). Thus, parents' perceptions about their interactions with schools and the usefulness of students' school programs would be expected to be associated with income and racial/ethnic differences as well.

In fact, such differences in parents' perceptions do occur (Exhibit 3-6). For example, parents of 55% of youth living in households with incomes of \$25,000 or less report their involvement in the IEP and transition planning process is "just the right amount," with 44% of parents reporting they would like to be more involved. For youth living in households with incomes between \$25,001 and \$50,000, the gap between these perceptions expands to two-thirds of parents who report being happy with the extent of their involvement and one-third of parents wanting more ( $p < .05$  compared with lower-income students). The gap widens even further for

**Exhibit 3-6**  
**PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN AND THE USEFULNESS OF**  
**TRANSITION PLANNING, BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND RACE/ETHNICITY**

	Income			Race/Ethnicity		
	\$25,000 or Less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African-American	Hispanic
<b>Percentage with parents who report they:</b>						
Want more involvement in the IEP and transition planning process	43.5 (2.9)	33.8 (3.2)	25.8 (2.8)	26.7 (2.0)	50.7 (4.0)	42.9 (5.2)
Have the right amount of involvement	55.0 (2.9)	65.4 (3.2)	73.1 (2.8)	72.4 (2.0)	47.3 (4.0)	55.6 (5.2)
<b>Percentage with parents who report transition planning is:</b>						
Very useful	44.3 (3.5)	34.9 (4.1)	27.5 (3.7)	31.2 (2.6)	41.9 (4.8)	45.5 (6.1)
Somewhat useful	41.5 (3.5)	45.7 (4.3)	49.4 (4.2)	49.0 (2.8)	45.4 (4.8)	40.5 (6.0)
Not very/not at all useful	14.2 (2.5)	19.4 (3.4)	23.1 (3.5)	19.8 (2.3)	12.8 (3.2)	14.0 (4.2)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.  
Standard errors are in parentheses.

youth living in households with incomes of more than \$50,000; almost three-fourths of these parents are content with their level of involvement in the IEP process, whereas one-fourth of these parents report wanting to be more involved ( $p < .001$  compared with low-income youth).

Although parents of higher income households are more satisfied with their level of involvement in the IEP and transition planning process, they are less satisfied with the usefulness of the planning for life after high school. Smaller proportions of students in higher income households than in low-income households have parents who report transition planning is “very useful” for preparing students for life after school (28% vs. 44%, respectively,  $p < .001$ ).

Parents of students with different racial/ethnic backgrounds also differ significantly in their perceptions regarding transition planning. White students are more likely to have parents who report that their level of involvement is “just the right amount” (72%) than are parents of African-American (47%) or Hispanic students (56%,  $p < .001$  for African-American and  $p < .01$  for Hispanic students). Moreover, significantly more parents of African-American and Hispanic students voice a desire for greater involvement in this process (51% and 43%, respectively) than do white students’ parents (27%,  $p < .001$ ). As is the case with income-related differences, despite being less satisfied with their involvement in decision-making, larger proportions of African-American and Hispanic students than white students have parents who report that their children’s education programs are “very useful” for preparing them for adult life (42% and 46%, respectively, vs. 32%;  $p < .05$ ).

The next and last chapter summarizes the information in this report from parents and school staff regarding the IEP and transition planning processes for secondary students with disabilities.