

1. Understanding the Perceptions and Expectations of Youth With Disabilities

A considerable body of research explores the relationships between subjective aspects of youth's experiences—e.g., their attitudes, perceptions, motivation, and self-efficacy—and their achievements in school (e.g., Anderman and Maehr 1994; Anderson, Hattie, and Hamilton 2005; Faircloth and Hamm 2005). Research related to the ability of students to “self-regulate” their learning (Schunk and Zimmerman 1994) considers students to be active participants in the learning process (Pintrich et al. 1986; Schunk and Meece 1992). This research also suggests that students make choices about their own participation and effort, in part on the basis of how they perceive learning tasks, the learning environment, and other participants in it, including teachers and other students (Hadwin et al. 2001; Weinstein and Mayer 1986). Those choices, such as whether to do their homework, in turn help shape their achievements, such as how much they learn and the grades or test scores they receive (Akey 2006; Liu et al. 2006; Tuckman 1999). The role of attitudes and perceptions also has been studied in the context of nonacademic achievements, such as musical and athletic success (Wigfield and Eccles 2002), and as they relate to behaviors outside of school (Manlove 1998) and in the years after leaving school (Bandura et al. 2001; Finn 2006).

A recognition of youth's attitudes as one potentially important ingredient in the successful transition of youth to early adulthood is reflected in the recently released *National Standards and Quality Indicators: Transition Toolkit for Systems Improvement* (National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition 2005). Standards and indicators for transition support are set forth in five areas, including youth development and leadership, which is defined as “a process that prepares a young person to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood and to achieve his or her full potential”; this preparation includes gaining “the ability to analyze one's own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals, and have the self-esteem, confidence, motivation, and abilities to carry them out” (p. 8).

The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), funded by the National Center for Special Education Research of the Institute of Education Sciences in the U.S. Department of Education, was congressionally mandated in 1997 to provide a national picture of the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of youth with disabilities as they transition to early adulthood. The many topics addressed in NLTS2 include the “self-representations” (Harter 1999; Repinski 2002) of young people with disabilities; these self-representations are “attributes or characteristics of the self that are consciously acknowledged by the individual through language—that is, how one describes oneself” (Harter 1999, p. 3). Self-representations have been solicited from youth with disabilities regarding themselves, their schooling, their personal relationships, and their hopes for the future. This report presents findings drawn from the first wave of data collected directly from youth on these topics.

Research Questions

In this report, NLTS2 findings are used to address the following questions regarding the self-representations and the expectations of youth with disabilities:

- How do youth with disabilities describe the kind of people they are—their feelings about themselves and their lives, and their skills and competencies?
- How do youth describe their secondary school experiences?
- How do youth characterize their personal relationships?
- What are their reported expectations for the future?
- How do these factors differ for youth with different disability and demographic characteristics?

As context for interpreting the findings related to these questions, the following sections of this chapter provide a brief overview of the NLTS2 design and sample. The data sources relevant to the report are described briefly, as are the characteristics of the youth for whom findings are reported.

Study Overview

NLTS2 is a 10-year-long study of the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of a nationally representative sample of youth with disabilities who were ages 13 through 16 and receiving special education services in grade 7 or above on December 1, 2000. The study is designed to collect data on sample members from multiple sources in five waves, beginning in 2001 and ending in 2009.¹

The NLTS2 sample was constructed in two stages.² A stratified random sample of school districts was selected from the universe of approximately 12,000 that served students receiving special education in at least one grade from 7th through 12th grades. These districts and 77 state-supported special schools that served primarily students with hearing and vision impairments and multiple disabilities were invited to participate in the study, with the intention of recruiting approximately 500 districts and as many special schools as possible from which to select a target sample of about 12,000 students. Recruitment efforts resulted in 501 school districts and 38 special schools agreeing to participate and providing rosters of students receiving special education services in the designated age range, from which the student sample was selected.

The roster of all students in the NLTS2 age range who were receiving special education services from each district and special school was stratified by primary disability category, as reported by the districts. Students then were selected randomly from each disability category. Sampling fractions were calculated that would produce enough students in each category so that, in the final study year, findings will generalize to most categories individually with an acceptable level of precision, accounting for attrition and for response rates to the parent/youth interview. A total of 11,276 students were selected and eligible to participate in NLTS2.

¹ Wave 1 included parent interviews (2001) surveys of school staff (2002) and assessments of the academic abilities of students who were ages 16 through 18 in 2002. Wave 2 involved interviews with both parents and youth (2003), a mail survey of youth whose parents reported they were able to respond to questions, but not by phone (2003), school staff surveys for youth still in high school (2004) and assessments of the academic abilities of youth who were ages 16 through 18 in 2004. Wave 3 (2005) repeated the telephone interviews and mail survey of youth, as will Waves 4 and 5 (2007 and 2009). High school transcripts are collected annually for youth leaving school that year.

² Appendix A provides additional details on the sample, data sources, and other methodological aspects of the study described here.

Data Sources for Youth With Disabilities

The data sources for self-representations of youth with disabilities are³

- a youth telephone interview and mail survey; and
- an in-person interview with youth conducted at the same time as a direct assessment of their academic abilities.

Analyses of youth's self-representations also involve data from

- a parent interview and mail survey; and
- school districts' reports of the primary disability category for which students were provided special education services when selected for the study.

Each data source for youth with disabilities is described briefly below and discussed in greater detail in appendix A.

Youth Self-Representations

The large majority of information reported in this document comes from youth with disabilities themselves in the form of responses to either a telephone interview or a self-administered mail survey, which contained a subset of key items from the telephone interview.⁴ Data from the two sources were combined for the majority of analyses reported here. A few additional items come from in-person interviews with youth conducted in conjunction with an assessment of their academic skills.

Youth telephone interview. NLTS2 sample members for whom working telephone numbers and addresses were available (a total of 8,672 youth) were eligible for the Wave 2 parent telephone interview in 2003.⁵ After making the initial telephone contact with the parents or guardians (referred to here as parents) of sample members and completing items intended only for adult respondents, parents were asked whether their adolescent children with disabilities were able to respond to questions about their experiences by telephone for themselves. Parents who responded affirmatively and whose sample children were younger than age 18 then were asked to grant permission for their children to be interviewed and told the kinds of questions that would be asked.⁶ Parents of youth 18 or older were informed of the kinds of questions that would be

³ Table A-1 in appendix A identifies the data source for each variable included in analyses in this report.

⁴ Only a subset of items was included in the mail survey because the full set of items was considered too lengthy to be feasible for a mail questionnaire format.

⁵ To be eligible, a sample member needed to have a working telephone number or current address. See appendix A for more information on sample eligibility.

⁶ Parents were told that interview questions would pertain to "school or work and social activities, as well as a few questions about things like...". For youth younger than 18, the sentence was completed with "[his/her] attitudes and experiences, like ever having been arrested." For youth age 18 or older, the sentence was completed with "[his/her] attitudes and experiences, including smoking, drinking, and ever having been arrested;" items related to these kinds of risk behaviors were asked only of youth ages 18 or older. A total of 164 parents reported that their children could respond to the telephone interview but did not give permission for their children to be interviewed (4 percent of those reportedly able to respond); the interview then continued with the parent and obtained additional information on subjects such as employment and postsecondary education. The parent continuation interview did not include any items addressed in this report; hence, their children are not represented in the findings presented here. Analyses of the disability category distribution and demographic factors of youth who

asked of youth but permission was not requested because youth were no longer minors. Parents of 3,778 youth responded affirmatively to both questions, making their children eligible for a telephone interview. Interviewers obtained contact information for these youth and attempted to complete a telephone interview with them. Telephone interviews were completed with 2,919 youth, 77 percent of the 3,778 who were eligible.⁷

Youth mail survey. If parent respondents to the Wave 2 telephone interview indicated that youth were not able to respond to questions about their experiences for themselves by telephone, interviewers asked whether youth would be able to complete a mail questionnaire. Parents of 860 youth responded positively, making their children eligible for a mail survey.⁸ A mailing address was obtained for those sample members, and a questionnaire was sent to the youth. Questionnaires were tailored to the circumstances of individual youth. For example, if a parent indicated in the telephone interview that a youth was employed, the questionnaire for that youth contained a section on employment experiences, which was not included in questionnaires for youth reported not to be employed. Questionnaires were returned for 441 youth, 51 percent of the 860 youth who were eligible.

These two sources yielded data for this report for 3,360 youth, 72 percent of those whom parents reported could respond to questions for themselves by phone or mail.

In-person youth interview. In addition to the telephone interview and mail survey, youth were interviewed in-person at the conclusion of a direct assessment of their academic skills; assessors/interviewers typically were school psychologists or teachers and were recruited in the geographic areas of eligible youth. Because in-person data collection can be labor intensive and costly, the NLTS2 design called for only one assessment and interview per sample member. An assessment/interview was attempted for each NLTS2 sample member for whom a telephone interview or mail questionnaire had been completed by a parent and parental consent for the assessment/interview had been provided; a total of 9,414 youth met these criteria.

Youth were eligible for an assessment/interview during the data collection wave in which they were 16 through 18 years old.⁹ This age range was selected to limit the variability in academic performance measured on the direct assessment that could be attributed to differences in the ages of the youth participating and to mesh with the every-2-year data collection cycle of the study. The study design linked the timing of assessments with school data collection (conducted in 2002 and 2004) because most assessments/interviews took place at school. The oldest two single-year age cohorts of youth (i.e., those ages 15 or 16 when sampled) reached the eligible age range in Wave 1 (2002); the younger two cohorts (those ages 13 or 14 when sampled) reached the eligible age range when Wave 2 school data were collected. A total of

were able to respond and given permission to do so and those who were not permitted to be interviewed reveal no statistically significant or sizable differences between the two groups.

⁷ If youth could not be reached by phone or did not return a mailed questionnaire, an attempt was made to recontact the parent and complete the second part of the telephone interview with the parent. Items on self-representations and expectations were not included when the second part of the interview was completed by a parent.

⁸ Permission for youth to be sent a mail questionnaire was not asked of parents because that questionnaire did not contain items considered potentially sensitive and because parents' providing a mailing address for the questionnaire was considered to be permission to send it.

⁹ Wave 1 assessments also included 10 youth whose assessments were not completed until shortly after their 19th birthdays.

5,222 youth participated in the NLTS2 assessment/interview, including 73 percent of the youth (a total of 2,442) who are the focus of this report.

Although the in-person youth interview covered a variety of topics, this report includes survey items related to friendships (e.g., agreement that the youth can find a friend when he/she needs one) and items related to youth's perceptions of their own personal autonomy, self-realization, and psychological empowerment (Wehmeyer 1997). The latter items were selected by the NLTS2 advisory panel and design team from The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer 2000); items were selected from among those in the original instrument with the highest factor loading and face validity to reflect the three conceptual domains noted above. Responses to all items are self-reports by youth.

Parent/Guardian Interview/Survey

Chapter 6 compares the expectations youth with disabilities have for their futures in 2003 with expectations their parents held for them in 2001. Parents/guardians of NLTS2 sample members were interviewed by telephone or surveyed by mail¹⁰ in that year, as part of Wave 1 data collection. Ninety-five percent of the youth who are the focus of this report (3,191 youth) also have Wave 1 data regarding their parents' expectations for their future.

School- and School-District-Identified Primary Disability Category

Information about the primary disability category of NLTS2 sample members came from rosters of students in the NLTS2 age range receiving special education services in the 2000-01 school year under the auspices of participating school districts and state-supported special schools.¹¹

Data Sources for Comparisons With Youth in the General Population

When similar data items are available, comparisons are made between youth with disabilities and the same-age youth in the general population. Data sources for these comparisons include the following:

- **The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Wave II (Add Health).** Comparison data are taken from public-use data sets from this nationally representative study that explores the health-related behaviors of adolescents in grades 7 through 12 and their associations with young adult outcomes. Data at the individual, family, school, and community levels were collected in two waves in 1994 and 1996. The public-use dataset consists of one-half of the core sample Wave 1 and 2 respondents, chosen at random, and one-half of the oversample of African American adolescents with a parent who has a college degree. The total number of respondents in this dataset is approximately 6,500. Comparison analyses include data from Wave 2 (1996) for youth

¹⁰ In Wave 1, a mail questionnaire containing a subset of telephone interview items was sent to parents who could not be reached by telephone.

¹¹ The definitions of the 12 primary disability categories used here are defined by law and presented in table A-5, appendix A.

who were 15 through 19 years old, to match the NLTS2 youth sample; approximately 2,650 cases are in this age range (Udry 1998).¹²

- **The National Household Education Survey, 1999 (NHES).** The chief goal of the NHES is to describe Americans' educational experiences across the early childhood to adult age range. To monitor educational trends over time, NHES conducts repeated measurements of the same phenomena in different years. The NHES has also fielded one-time surveys on topics of interest to the Department of Education. The NHES has been conducted in the springs of 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005. The most recent data collected from youth themselves are from the 1999 administration; items used here concern perceptions of school and are presented for youth 15 through 19 years old (Nolin et al. 2001). Approximately 3,720 cases are included in this analysis subset.¹³
- **The Shell Poll, 1999.** Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted this telephone survey as part of an ongoing survey program sponsored by the Shell Oil Company. It included a representative cross section of 1,015 American¹⁴ high-school-age youth drawn from 505 randomly determined localities throughout the country. The overall results of this survey have a margin of error of ± 3.1 percent (Shell Oil Company 1999).

Many of the comparisons between data from NLTS2 and these surveys of the general population use identical data items and response categories. Where there are differences in the wording of items and/or response categories, these are pointed out in footnotes.

Youth Included in the Report

The youth who are the focus of this report represent only a subset of youth with disabilities who received special education services in secondary school in 2001, not the entire population. The full population to which the NLTS2 sample generalizes is a cohort of youth who were ages 13 through 16 and received special education services in grade 7 or above in participating schools and school districts as of December 1, 2000. Weights for analyses reported in this document are calculated so that all youth who responded for themselves to a telephone interview or completed a mail questionnaire generalize to the subset of that cohort who would be capable of responding for themselves. To illustrate, consider the following groups:

¹² For additional information on Add Health, see <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>.

¹³ For additional information on NHES 1999, see <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000079>.

¹⁴ Alaska and Hawaii were excluded from the sample.

A = The entire NLTS2 sample.

A1 = The portion of A for whom no contact was attempted because parents stated that youth were unable to respond to an interview or complete a questionnaire. This also includes youth known to be deceased.

A2 = The portion of A for whom contact was attempted by telephone or mail survey because their parents stated they were capable of responding and, in the case of telephone interviews for youth younger than 18, gave consent for an interview.

For each of these sample groups, there is a corresponding group in the universe, which can be denoted with a "B," such that the universe is B, the portion of the universe whose parents would state that they are unable to respond (had they been included in the sample) is denoted B1, and the remaining portion is denoted B2. The sizes of these universe subgroups can be estimated by weighting all youth in A (as if they all had been respondents) up to the entire universe, B. Then the sum of the weights of all youth in A, A1, and A2 are estimates of the number of youth in B, B1, and B2.

However, not all youth in A2 were interviewed or completed a questionnaire. Let those who did respond be labeled A2r. Weights were computed (adjusting for various youth and school characteristics used as stratifying or post-stratifying variables) that project A2r up to B2. Thus the youth survey weights for A2 respondents project to the portion of the universe (B2) for whom interviews would be attempted if all individuals in the universe had participated in NLTS2.

The subgroup of youth who could respond for themselves differ in several ways from those whose parents indicated they were unable to respond. Appendix B provides detailed information regarding differences between these groups, examples of which are summarized briefly here.

The disability profiles of the group of youth who responded for themselves do not differ significantly from the profiles of those whose parents were interview respondents. Youth respondents are more likely than youth whose parents were respondents to have high self-care skills (96 percent vs. 90 percent, $p < .01$), but these two groups do not differ significantly in their functional cognitive skills or social skills. Youth respondents also are less likely to have trouble communicating (26 percent vs. 43 percent, $p < .001$), understanding language (30 percent vs. 43 percent, $p < .01$), and using their arms and hands for fine motor activities (4 percent vs. 11 percent, $p < .01$). Consistent with these differences, they also are less likely to have a disability identified in their first year of life (13 percent vs. 25 percent, $p < .01$), although there is no significant difference in their rate of receiving special education services their first years in school.

Differences in youth's services are apparent. For example, youth who were not their own respondents were more likely to receive a several related and support services (e.g., occupational therapy and transportation services).

No significant demographic differences or differences in youth's instructional programs between the two respondent groups are apparent.

Analysis Approaches

Analyses reported in this document involve simple descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages, means), bivariate relationships (i.e., cross-tabulations), and correlations. All statistics are weighted to be representative of a larger population of students (as discussed earlier). These analysis approaches exclude cases with missing values; no imputation of missing values has been conducted.

Statistical tests examining differences between independent subgroups or between responses to different items given by the same group that involve categorical variables with more than two possible response categories were conducted by treating each of the possible response categories as separate dichotomous items. For example, each of the three possible response categories of “very much like me,” “a little like me,” and “not at all like me” was treated as a separate dichotomous item. The percentages of youth who gave each response were then compared across disability or demographic groups or across different questionnaire/interview items. This approach, rather than using scale scores (e.g., the average response for a disability group on a 3-point scale created by assigning values of 1 through 3 to the three response categories), was adopted for two reasons: the proper scaling for the response categories was not apparent, and it was felt that reporting differences in percentages responding in each of the response categories would be more meaningful and easier to interpret by readers than reporting differences in mean values.

Rather than test for differences between all independent subgroups (e.g., youth in different disability categories) simultaneously (e.g., using a $k \times 2$ chi-square test of homogeneity of distribution, where k is the number of disability groups), the statistical significance of differences between selected pairs of independent subgroups is tested. This approach has been followed because the intent is to identify significant differences between specific groups (e.g., youth with learning disabilities are significantly more likely than those with mental retardation to report that they are cared for “a lot” by parents), rather than to identify a more general “disability effect” (e.g., the observed distribution across disability categories differs significantly from what would be expected from the marginal distributions) for the variable of interest.

The test statistic used to compare Bernoullian-distributed responses (i.e., responses that can be allocated into one of two categories and coded as 0 or 1) for two independent subgroups is analogous to a chi-square test for equality of distribution (Conover 1971) and approximately follows a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom. However, because the test statistic itself is more similar in form to the square of a two sample t statistic with unequal variances¹⁵

¹⁵ In the case of unweighted data, comparing two percentages is usually accomplished using nonparametric statistics, such as the Fisher exact test. In the case of NLTS2, the data are weighted, and the usual nonparametric tests would yield significance levels that are too small, because the NLTS2 effective sample size is less than the nominal sample size. The p values for the test statistic used as an alternative approach to determine statistical significance are derived from an $F(1, \text{infinity})$ distribution (i.e., a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom). To test for the equality between the mean values of the responses to a single survey item in two disjoint subpopulations, we begin by computing a ratio where the numerator is the difference of the sample means for those subpopulations. (In the case of Bernoulli variables, each mean is a weighted percentage). The denominator for the ratio is the estimated standard error of the numerator (i.e., the square root of the sum of squares of the estimated standard errors for the two means in the numerator). This test statistic is essentially equivalent to a two-sample t test for independent samples (Welch 1947) using weighted data. Sample sizes (and consequently degrees of freedom) for these student t types of ratios are typically reasonably large (i.e., never fewer than 30 in each

(Satterthwaite 1946), and because a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom is the same as an F distribution with one degree of freedom in the numerator and infinite degrees of freedom in the denominator (Johnson and Kotz 1970), this statistic can be considered the same as an F value; it also can be considered “ χ^2 ”.

Tests also were conducted to examine differences in the rates at which youth with disabilities as a whole provided specific kinds of self-representations (for example, the percentage of youth who report relying on parents for support “a lot” compared with the percentage who rely on friends “a lot”) using an analogous one-sample statistic based on difference scores.¹⁶ The test statistic follows a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom for sample sizes larger than 30, and for similar reasons to those cited above, is considered roughly equivalent to an $F(1, \text{infinity})$ distribution.

In contrast to the dichotomous approach used in statistical tests examining differences in specific responses given by subgroups or across items by the same group, correlations were calculated by comparing responses on a scale that reflects the number of response category options. For example, a 4-point scale was created for variables with response categories related to youth’s perceptions of their strengths of “very good, (4 points)” “pretty good,” “not very good,” or “not at all good” (1 point).

Technical Notes

Readers should remember the following issues when interpreting the findings in this report:

- **Purpose of the report.** The purpose of this report is descriptive; as a nonexperimental study, NLTS2 does not provide data that can be used to address causal questions. The descriptions provided in this document concern the self-reported perceptions of youth. No attempt is made to “validate” these self-perceptions with information on youth’s understanding of the survey items or with direct assessments of students’ abilities or behaviors. Further, the report does not attempt to explain why youth responded as they did or why youth in different subgroups (e.g., disability categories) differ in their responses.
- **Subgroups reported.** In each chapter, the descriptive findings regarding youth’s self-representations are reported for the full sample of youth; those findings are heavily influenced by information provided by youth with learning disabilities, who constitute

group), so the ratio follows by the Central Limit Theorem (Wilks 1962), an approximate normal distribution. For a two-tailed test, the test statistic is the square of the ratio, which then follows an approximate chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom. Because a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom is the same as an F distribution with one degree of freedom in the numerator and an infinite number of degrees in the denominator, the test statistic approximately follows an $F(1, \text{infinity})$ distribution.

¹⁶ Testing for the significance of differences in responses to two survey items for the same individuals involves identifying for each youth the pattern of response to the two items. Responses to each item (e.g., the youth reported relying “a lot” on parents for support—yes or no—and reported relying on friends “a lot” for support—yes or no) are scored as 0 or 1, producing difference values for individual students of +1 (responded affirmatively to the first item but not the second), 0 (responded affirmatively to both or neither item), or -1 (responded affirmatively to the second item but not the first). The test statistic is the square of a ratio, where the numerator of the ratio is the weighted mean change score and the denominator is an estimate of the standard error of that mean. Since the ratio approaches a normal distribution by the Central Limit Theorem, this test statistic approximately follows a chi-square distribution with one degree of freedom, that is, an $F(1, \text{infinity})$ distribution.

63 percent of the weighted sample (see appendix B). Youth with mental retardation, emotional disturbances, or other health impairments, and speech/language impairments constitute 12 percent, 12 percent, 5 percent, and 4 percent of the weighted sample, respectively. The other seven categories together make up less than 6 percent of the weighted sample. Findings then are reported separately for youth in each federal special education disability category. Comparisons also were conducted between groups of youth who differed with respect to age, gender, race/ethnicity, and household income. These bivariate analyses should not be interpreted as implying that a factor on which subgroups are differentiated (e.g., disability category) has a causal relationship with the differences reported. Further, readers should be aware that demographic factors (e.g., race/ethnicity and household income) are correlated among youth with disabilities, as well as being distributed differently across disability categories (e.g., youth in the category of mental retardation are disproportionately likely to be African American, and those in the other health impairment category are disproportionately likely to be White, relative to the general population; see appendix B table B-5, for percentage of youth within each disability category, by demographic characteristics).¹⁷

- **Findings are weighted.** NLTS2 was designed to provide a national picture of the characteristics, experiences, and achievements of youth with disabilities in the NLTS2 age range as they transition to young adulthood. Therefore, all the statistics presented in this report are weighted estimates of the national population of students receiving special education in the NLTS2 age group who could describe their own perspectives, and of each disability category individually.
- **Standard errors.** For each mean and percentage in this report, a standard error is presented that indicates the precision of the estimate. For example, a variable with a weighted estimated value of 50 percent and a standard error of 2.00 means that the value for the total population, if it had been measured, would, with 95 percent confidence, lie between 46 percent and 54 percent (i.e., within plus or minus 1.96 x 2 percentage points of 50 percent). Thus, smaller standard errors allow for greater confidence to be placed in the estimate, whereas larger ones require caution.
- **Small samples.** Although NLTS2 data are weighted to represent the population, the size of standard errors is influenced heavily by the actual number of youth in a given group (e.g., a disability category). In fact, findings are not reported separately for groups that do not include at least 30 sample members because groups with very small samples have comparatively large standard errors. For example, because there are relatively few youth with deaf-blindness, estimates for that group have relatively large standard errors. Therefore, readers should be cautious in interpreting results for this group and others with small sample sizes and large standard errors.
- **Significant differences.** A large number of statistical analyses were conducted and are presented in this report. Since no explicit adjustments were made for multiple comparisons, the likelihood of finding at least one statistically significant difference when no difference exists in the population is substantially larger than the Type 1 error

¹⁷ See Wagner, Marder, Levine, et al. (2003) for relationships of demographic factors and disability categories for the full NLTS2 sample.

for each individual analysis. This may be particularly true when many of the variables on which the groups are being compared are measures of the same or similar constructs, as is the case in this report. To partially compensate for the number of analyses that were conducted, we used a relatively conservative p value of .01. The text mentions only differences that reach a level of statistical significance of at least $p < .01$. If no level of statistical significance is reported, the group differences described do not attain the $p < .01$ level of statistical significance. Readers also are cautioned that the meaningfulness of differences reported here cannot be inferred from their statistical significance.

Organization of the Report

Chapter 2 presents “self-descriptions” (Harter 1999, p. 3) of youth with disabilities regarding themselves and their lives—i.e., “who I am” and “how I feel.” Chapter 3 presents “self-evaluations” of youth’s competencies—i.e., “how good I am”—(Harter 1999, p. 3) in several domains. Chapter 4 provides findings regarding the views youth with disabilities have of their schooling, including academic challenges, relationships with adults and other students, school safety, and services and supports provided. Youth’s personal relationships are the focus of chapter 5. Chapter 6 describes the expectations youth with disabilities hold for their futures and compares them with expectations held for them by their parents. Chapter 7 summarizes key points from the report. Appendix A details the sample design and sample weighting strategies, sources of data for variables used in the analyses, and analysis approaches. Appendix B reports comparisons of youth respondents and youth for whom parents responded and examines the distribution of demographic characteristics across disability categories for youth included in this report.