3. Self-Evaluations of the Strengths and Competencies of Youth With Disabilities

This chapter focuses on the "self-evaluations" of youth with disabilities—reports by youth of "how good I am" with regard to particular competencies (Harter 1999, p. 3), an important addition to the self-descriptions of "who I am" and "how I feel" presented in chapter 2 in understanding the perspectives of youth with disabilities. An individual's sense of competence—a perception that he or she is capable or skilled in particular areas, such as athletics (i.e., "domain-specific" competence; Harter 1999) or in broader dimensions of their lives, such as decisionmaking—can be a protective factor against a variety of poor outcomes for adolescents, including depression (Smari, Petursdottir, and Porsteinsdottir 2001) and substance use (Lifrak et al. 1997; Miller 1988; Smith et al. 1995). Perceived competence also has been found to be a critical component of self-esteem (Branden 1995; Mruk 1995); a sense of competence and higher self-esteem is associated with better academic performance (Covington 1989; Martin et al. 2005) and with lower rates of early sexual activity among girls, criminal justice system involvement, health problems, and suicidal ideation (Crockenberg and Soby 1989; Erermis et al. 2004; Spencer et al., 2002; Trzesniewski et al. 2006). Further, poor self-esteem has been found to be amenable to intervention (Haney and Durlak 1998), underscoring the need for identifying students whose self-evaluations indicate a low sense of competence.

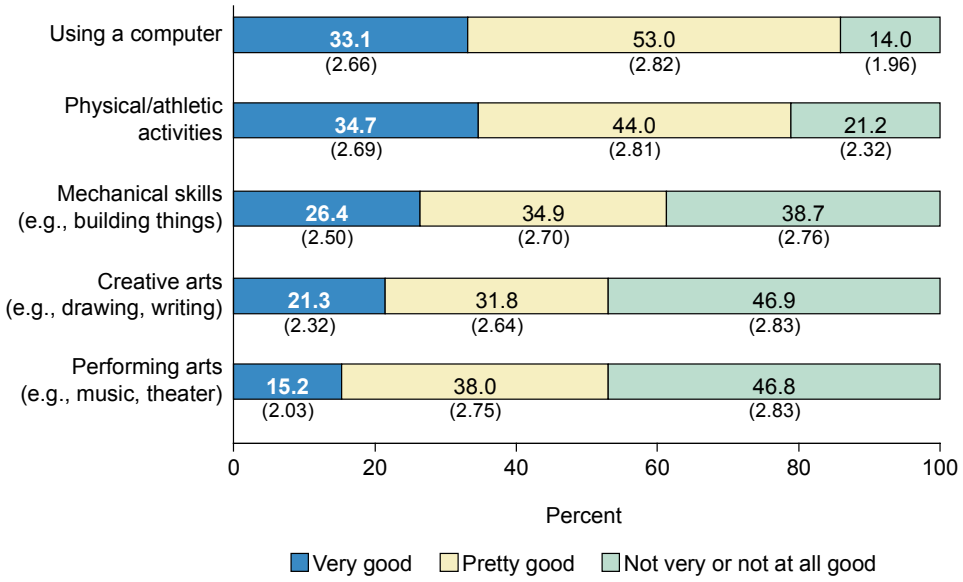
To document the self-representations of the competencies of youth with disabilities, youth were asked to report in telephone interviews how well they perform in six specific domains: athletics, computer use, mechanical tasks, creative arts, performing arts, and self-advocacy. In addition, two subscales from The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer 2000) related to the broad concepts of personal autonomy and psychological empowerment were administered in in-person interviews with youth.

Domain-Specific Competencies

For each of the areas indicated in figure 6, youth were asked to report on a 4-point scale whether they thought they were "very good, (4 points)" "pretty good," "not very good," or "not at all good" (1 point). A sizeable percentage of youth with disabilities believe themselves to be at least "pretty good" in each of these areas, which varies, depending on the skill, from 53 percent who rate themselves as "pretty good" or "very good" in performing arts to 79 percent who give similar ratings to their physical or athletic abilities. More than one-third (35 percent) consider themselves to be "very good" athletes. In the current age of rapidly growing technology, one-third of youth with disabilities (33 percent) state they are "very good" at using a computer. Twenty-six percent report that their mechanical skills are "very good," about 1 in 5 (21 percent) rate their creative arts abilities as "very good," and 15 percent consider their performing arts skills as being "very good."

At the same time, many youth with disabilities think they do not have artistic talent. Almost half (47 percent) report they are "not very" or "not at all good" at creative or performing arts. More than one third (39 percent) consider themselves to be "not very" or "not at all good" at mechanical manipulations. Approximately one in five (21 percent) give themselves low ratings for being proficient at physical activities, and about one in seven report they are "not very" or "not at all good" at using a computer (14 percent).

Figure 6. Youth with disabilities' reported self-evaluations of their strengths and abilities



NOTE: Response categories "not very good" and "not at all good" have been collapsed for reporting purposes. Standard errors are in parentheses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 2 youth telephone interview/mail survey, 2003.

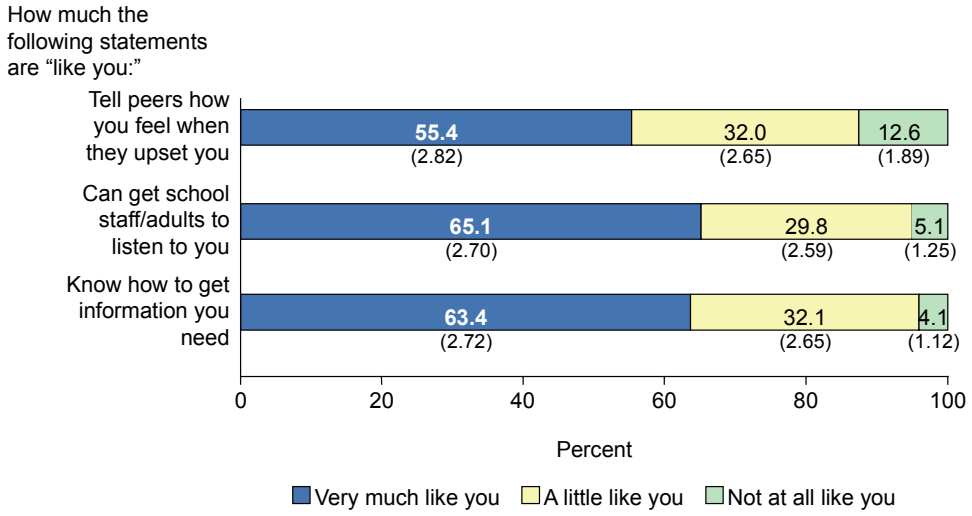
Parents of youth included in this report were asked to rate their children on the same set of strengths and abilities using the same 4-point scale. A comparison of parents' and youth's perceptions indicates that, overall, parents tend to hold higher opinions of their children's strengths than youth hold of themselves. Parents are more likely than youth to consider the youth to be "very good" at four of the five skills and abilities—reporting more positive ratings for using a computer (56 percent vs. 33 percent, $p < .001$), having mechanical skills (37 percent vs. 26 percent, $p < .01$), being skilled in the creative arts (35 percent vs. 21 percent, $p < .001$), and being skilled in the performing arts (28 percent vs. 15 percent, $p < .001$).

Despite these differences, parents' and youth's perceptions are related to each other in that youth who hold higher estimates of their abilities tend to have parents who also hold high estimates of the youth's abilities and vice versa. Values on the 4-point response scale that were reported by parents for each skill area were correlated with scale values reported by youth. All five comparisons of ratings between parents and youth have correlation coefficients of .35 or higher ($p < .001$). Correlations between parents' and youth's perceptions range from $r = .35$ ($p < .001$) for ratings related to computer use to $r = .46$ ($p < .001$) for ratings related to physical/athletic abilities.

In addition to these five domains of competence already presented, NLTS2 investigated the self-evaluations of the self-advocacy skills of youth with disabilities. Such skills are an important element of "self-determination," a concept that has emerged in the special education field to describe a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs—including an understanding of one's own strengths and limitations and belief in oneself as capable and effective in interacting with peers and adults to meet those needs—that enables individuals to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior (Field et al. 1998).

Youth with disabilities give generally positive reports of their competence in interacting with peers and adults. When asked to report on a 3-point scale, ranging from "not at all like you" (1 point) to "very much like you" (3 points), how much three statements about their beliefs in their competence were like them (figure 7), 55 percent of youth indicate that the statement "You can tell other people your age how you feel when they upset you or hurt your feelings" is "very much" like them. Regarding dealing with adults, almost two-thirds (65 percent) agree that the statement "You can get school staff and other adults to listen to you" is "very much" like them, and a similar percentage of youth (63 percent) indicate that the statement "You know how to get the information you need" is "very much" like them.

Figure 7. Youth with disabilities' reported self-evaluations of self-advocacy skills



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 2 youth telephone interview/mail survey, 2003.

A fourth aspect of self-advocacy was measured for the subgroup of youth with disabilities who responded affirmatively that they consider themselves to have a disability and that they are receiving services or therapies because of a disability. This subgroup of youth was asked to report on a 3-point scale how often they "tell professionals what you think about the services they provide you" on a 3-point scale, with response options of "often" (3 points), "sometimes," and "hardly ever" (1 point). About equal proportions of youth report that they "often" give opinions on services to providers (32 percent), "sometimes" do so (36 percent), and "hardly ever" share opinions with providers (32 percent).

Correlations among the four self-advocacy competency scales were all statistically significant. Values on the response scales for each competency were correlated, producing correlation coefficients that range from .16 (between youth knowing how to get needed information and giving service providers opinions on services; $p < .001$) to .28 (between youth knowing how to get needed information and being able to get school staff to listen to them; $p < .001$).

General Competencies

To obtain a broader picture of how youth with disabilities represent more general competencies than are assessed with domain-specific questions, NLTS2 asked youth to report in an in-person interview[1] the extent to which their behavior reflects skills associated with two subscales of the Arc's Self-Determination Scale—those reflecting personal autonomy and psychological empowerment (Wehmeyer 1997). Items were selected from The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer 2000) that address these topics; they were selected from among those in the original instrument with the highest factor loading and face validity to reflect these conceptual domains. Responses to all items are self-reports by youth.

Behavior is considered to be autonomous if a person acts independently according to his or her own preferences, interests, and abilities without undue external influence or interference (Wehmeyer 2000). Items in the personal autonomy subscale include those assessing independence in personal care, interacting with the environment, pursuing interests in the community, and personal expression; scores are associated with the ability to make choices and act on personal preferences and beliefs related to youth's personal and social lives.[2]

Responses were reported on a 4-point scale ranging from "not even when I have the chance" (1 point) to "every time I have the chance" (4 points). A scale of personal autonomy created by summing response values across the individual items ranges from 10 (all responses "not even when I have the chance") to 40 (all responses "every time I have the chance"); values are reported as low (10 to 20), medium (21 to 30), and high (31 to 40). Very few youth with disabilities score in the low range for personal autonomy (2 percent), whereas about equal proportions score in the medium and high ranges (48 percent and 50 percent, respectively; figure 8).

Psychological empowerment refers to a combination of attitudes and abilities leading individuals to believe they have the ability to achieve a desired outcome (Ward 1988; Zimmerman 1990). Items used in this subscale ask youth to consider and select one of two opposing views of their abilities in the areas of decision-making, perseverance, and locus of control.[3] Items are scored "0" to reflect a nonempowered self-evaluation or "1" to reflect an empowered self-evaluation. A summative scale of psychological empowerment ranges from 0 to 6, with scores reported as low (0 to 2), medium (3 to 4), and high (5 to 6). Most youth (82 percent) score in the high range on the psychological empowerment subscale measure; 3 percent score in the low category.

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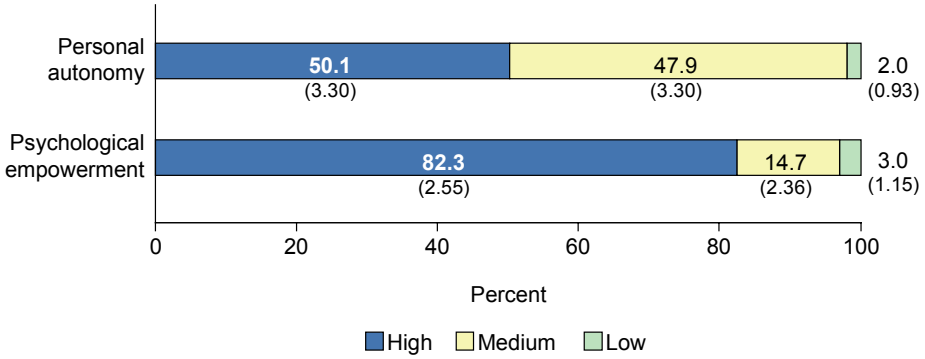
[1] Although the in-person interview was conducted with all youth for whom a direct assessment of academic skills was completed, responses are included here only for the subsample of youth who were able to respond for themselves to the Wave 2 telephone interview or mail survey.

[2] Personal autonomy items include: I keep my own personal items together; I keep good personal care and grooming; I make friends with other kids my age; I keep my appointments and meetings; I plan weekend activities that I like to do; I am involved in school-related activities; I volunteer for things that I am interested in; I go to restaurants that I like; I choose gifts to give to family and friends, and I choose how to spend my personal money.

[3] Psychological empowerment items include: I tell others when I have a new or different opinion, or I usually agree with others' opinions and/or ideas; I can make my own decisions, or Other people make decisions for me; I can get what I want by working hard, or I need good luck to get what I want; I keep trying even after I get something wrong, or It is no use to keep trying because it will not work; I usually make good choices, or I usually do not make good choices; and I will be able to make choices that are important to me, or My choices will not be honored.

Figure 8. Reported competencies of youth with disabilities related to personal autonomy and psychological empowerment



NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), youth in-person interviews, 2002 and 2004.

Disability Category Differences in Self-Evaluations of Students' Competencies

Several of youth's self-evaluations of their competencies differ significantly across disability categories.

Domain-Specific Competencies

Perceptions of strengths and abilities vary both within and across disability categories (table 5). Youth with emotional disturbances are significantly more likely to report having "very good" mechanical skills (41 percent) than are those in all other categories except learning disability, traumatic brain injury, and multiple disabilities; ratings for other disability categories range from 7 percent for youth with orthopedic impairments to 25 percent for those with other health impairments. Those with emotional disturbances also are more likely to regard themselves as having "very good" athletic skills (43 percent), compared with youth with orthopedic impairments (11 percent, $p < .001$) or autism (14 percent, $p < .001$). Youth with autism are more likely to consider themselves as having "very good" computer skills (62 percent) than youth with learning disabilities (29 percent, $p < .001$), speech and language impairments (38 percent, $p < .01$), mental retardation (33 percent, $p < .01$), or other health impairments (37 percent, $p < .001$).

Within each disability category, youth appraise their skills and abilities as being stronger in some areas than others. For example, youth with learning disabilities are more likely to consider themselves to be athletic than artistic (36 percent report being "very good" at athletics vs. 22 percent at creative arts, $p < .001$, and 14 percent at performing arts, $p < .001$), and youth with orthopedic impairments are more likely to regard themselves as being computer savvy (50 percent "very good") than as mechanical (7 percent) or athletic (11 percent; $p < .001$ for both comparisons).

Table 5. Youth with disabilities' perceptions of strengths and interests, by disability category

How youth rates his or her abilities	Learning disability	Speech/ 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
	Percent / standard error											
Athletic activities												
Very good	36.4 (4.09)	32.1 (4.16)	26.2 (5.12)	42.5 (4.57)	31.1 (5.67)	25.4 (5.48)	10.7 (3.55)	31.4 (4.36)	13.5 (5.09)	24.7 (7.80)	24.4 (6.44)	20.8 (7.33)
Pretty good	44.7 (4.23)	48.3 (4.45)	46.5 (5.81)	38.1 (4.49)	45.8 (6.10)	42.7 (6.23)	34.2 (5.45)	42.5 (4.65)	33.0 (7.00)	43.3 (8.96)	46.2 (7.47)	48.0 (9.02)
Not very or not at all good	18.9 (3.33)	19.6 (3.54)	27.3 (5.19)	19.4 (3.65)	23.1 (5.16)	31.8 (5.87)	55.1 (5.72)	26.1 (4.12)	53.5 (7.43)	32.0 (8.44)	29.4 (6.83)	31.2 (8.36)
Using a computer												
Very good	28.7 (3.85)	38.3 (4.32)	33.0 (5.44)	44.9 (4.58)	53.6 (6.11)	41.9 (6.21)	49.7 (5.73)	37.2 (4.53)	62.0 (7.14)	40.8 (8.85)	50.4 (7.48)	47.6 (9.02)
Pretty good	57.8 (4.20)	51.5 (4.45)	45.7 (5.77)	41.8 (4.55)	39.9 (6.00)	48.3 (6.29)	44.0 (5.68)	50.7 (4.68)	30.1 (6.74)	51.9 (9.00)	35.5 (7.16)	35.8 (8.65)
Not very or not at all good	13.5 (2.90)	10.1 (2.69)	21.4 (4.75)	13.3 (3.13)	6.6 (3.03)	9.8 (3.75)	6.3 (2.78)	12.2 (3.06)	7.8 (3.95)	7.3 (4.68)	14.2 (5.22)	16.6 (6.72)
Mechanical skills												
Very good	26.6 (3.77)	15.3 (3.22)	19.0 (4.57)	41.2 (4.55)	17.3 (4.63)	11.2 (4.00)	7.4 (2.95)	25.0 (4.06)	14.6 (5.23)	24.8 (7.78)	24.9 (6.50)	18.9 (7.14)
Pretty good	34.8 (4.06)	41.4 (4.40)	30.8 (5.38)	34.3 (4.39)	40.8 (6.02)	25.3 (5.51)	32.0 (5.26)	43.3 (4.64)	29.0 (6.72)	38.1 (8.74)	33.6 (7.10)	38.3 (8.87)
Not very or not at all good	38.6 (4.15)	43.3 (4.43)	50.2 (5.83)	24.5 (3.97)	41.9 (6.05)	63.5 (6.10)	60.6 (5.51)	31.8 (4.36)	56.4 (7.34)	37.0 (8.70)	41.5 (7.41)	42.8 (9.03)
Creative arts												
Very good	22.1 (3.55)	17.0 (3.34)	14.8 (4.12)	26.2 (4.05)	20.9 (4.99)	23.9 (5.38)	19.3 (4.44)	19.8 (3.73)	25.2 (6.36)	21.6 (7.41)	16.1 (5.55)	22.9 (7.59)
Pretty good	32.4 (4.00)	34.2 (4.22)	23.0 (4.89)	38.4 (4.48)	34.0 (5.81)	35.0 (6.02)	29.4 (5.13)	31.3 (4.35)	43.6 (7.26)	22.9 (7.57)	19.6 (6.00)	35.1 (8.62)
Not very or not at all good	45.5 (4.26)	48.8 (4.45)	62.2 (5.63)	35.3 (4.41)	45.1 (6.11)	41.1 (6.21)	51.3 (5.63)	48.8 (4.68)	31.2 (6.78)	55.5 (8.95)	64.4 (7.23)	42.1 (8.91)
Performing arts												
Very good	13.6 (2.92)	17.9 (3.44)	17.4 (4.40)	19.1 (3.63)	19.1 (4.82)	25.2 (5.48)	13.4 (3.94)	14.3 (3.29)	18.3 (5.74)	20.0 (7.20)	21.3 (6.15)	22.7 (7.56)
Pretty good	40.8 (4.19)	38.4 (4.37)	32.3 (5.43)	33.0 (4.34)	30.0 (5.61)	42.3 (6.23)	30.9 (5.35)	35.6 (4.50)	36.2 (7.13)	31.7 (8.38)	25.8 (6.57)	29.3 (8.22)
Not very or not at all good	45.7 (4.25)	43.8 (4.45)	50.3 (5.81)	47.9 (4.61)	50.9 (6.12)	32.5 (5.91)	55.7 (5.75)	50.1 (4.70)	45.5 (7.39)	48.3 (9.00)	52.9 (7.50)	48.0 (9.02)

NOTE: Response categories "not very good" and "not at all good" have been collapsed for reporting purposes.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 2 youth telephone interview/mail survey, 2003.

Youth in different disability categories do not differ significantly in several of their self-evaluations of self-advocacy skills (table 6). For example, there are no statistically significant differences among youth in different disability categories in their reports of being able to get school staff and other adults to listen to them or in how often they report telling professionals what they think about their services. Additionally, no differences among disability categories in youth's self-evaluations of their ability to get information they need for daily activities reach statistical significance at the $p < .01$ level. An exception to this pattern is that two-thirds (66 percent) of youth with visual impairments state they are readily able to tell their peers how

they feel when the peers upset them, whereas about half as many youth with autism (34 percent) report being similarly competent ($p < .001$).

Table 6. Youth with disabilities' feelings of competence, by disability category

Competence	Learning disability	Speech/ 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
	Percent / standard error											
Percentage reporting how much the following statements are "like you:"												
Tell peers how you feel when they upset you												
Very much like you	58.1 (4.22)	48.0 (4.45)	45.7 (5.85)	56.7 (4.62)	47.7 (6.14)	65.8 (6.00)	52.2 (5.75)	51.4 (4.74)	34.4 (7.00)	60.3 (8.81)	50.7 (7.45)	48.9 (9.12)
A little like you	32.6 (4.01)	39.4 (4.35)	32.0 (5.47)	23.0 (3.92)	42.1 (6.07)	25.9 (5.54)	36.6 (5.54)	35.8 (4.54)	46.6 (7.35)	32.5 (8.43)	31.0 (6.90)	38.6 (8.88)
Not at all like you	9.3 (2.48)	12.5 (2.95)	22.3 (4.89)	20.4 (3.76)	10.2 (3.72)	8.3 (3.49)	11.2 (3.63)	12.8 (3.17)	19.0 (5.78)	7.1 (4.62)	18.3 (5.77)	12.5 (6.03)
Can get school staff and adults to listen to you												
Very much like you	66.7 (4.01)	57.5 (4.40)	61.6 (5.68)	65.5 (4.40)	60.4 (6.02)	70.3 (5.77)	67.7 (5.38)	60.3 (4.59)	56.1 (7.31)	69.1 (8.32)	63.6 (7.10)	73.1 (8.00)
A little like you	29.3 (3.88)	36.3 (4.28)	30.9 (5.39)	27.7 (4.14)	30.9 (5.69)	25.7 (5.52)	29.5 (5.25)	34.5 (4.46)	36.4 (7.09)	26.5 (7.95)	26.7 (6.53)	18.6 (7.02)
Not at all like you	4.1 (1.69)	6.2 (2.15)	7.5 (3.07)	6.8 (2.33)	8.7 (3.47)	3.9 (2.44)	2.8 (1.90)	5.3 (2.10)	7.5 (3.88)	4.4 (3.69)	9.7 (4.37)	8.3 (4.98)
Know how to get information you need												
Very much like you	63.5 (4.09)	61.6 (4.33)	57.4 (5.76)	74.3 (4.05)	63.6 (5.91)	77.4 (5.32)	60.0 (5.63)	61.2 (4.58)	63.2 (7.11)	66.6 (8.49)	60.7 (7.34)	66.7 (8.51)
A little like you	33.4 (4.01)	33.6 (4.20)	32.9 (5.48)	22.5 (3.87)	33.3 (5.79)	21.6 (5.23)	36.3 (5.52)	34.8 (4.48)	32.2 (6.89)	27.5 (8.04)	31.1 (6.96)	33.3 (8.51)
Not at all like you	3.1 (1.47)	4.8 (1.90)	9.7 (3.45)	3.1 (1.61)	3.1 (2.13)	1.0 (1.27)	3.7 (2.17)	4.0 (1.84)	4.6 (3.09)	5.9 (4.24)	8.1 (4.10)	#
Tell professionals their opinions on services provided												
Often	33.3 (9.83)	23.0 (9.85)	48.6 (16.42)	31.5 (10.22)	25.7 (8.90)	23.6 (8.03)	23.0 (7.92)	30.7 (8.14)	23.2 (9.41)	35.7 (15.28)	18.5 (9.45)	‡
Sometimes	33.0 (9.81)	45.2 (11.65)	29.0 (14.91)	33.3 (10.37)	47.7 (10.18)	50.6 (9.46)	47.9 (9.40)	38.9 (8.61)	34.8 (10.62)	33.2 (15.02)	54.6 (12.12)	‡
Hardly ever	33.7 (9.86)	31.9 (10.91)	22.4 (13.70)	35.1 (10.50)	26.6 (9.00)	25.9 (8.29)	29.1 (8.55)	30.4 (8.12)	42.1 (11.01)	31.1 (14.77)	26.8 (10.78)	‡

‡ Responses for items with fewer than 30 respondents are not reported.

Rounds to zero.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Wave 2 youth telephone interview/mail survey, 2003.

General Competencies

There is considerable variation in scores on the personal autonomy subscale between youth in different disability categories (table 7). Although few youth (0 to 5 percent) in any disability category score in the low range, greater variation exists across disability categories for scores in the high ranges. The percentages of youth with high scores on personal autonomy range from 23 percent to 63 percent. Fewer than one-quarter of those with autism receive high scores (23 percent), compared with 63 percent of youth with visual impairments ($p < .001$), 57 percent of youth with hearing impairments ($p < .001$), 55 percent of youth with speech or language impairments ($p < .001$), 53 percent of youth with multiple disabilities ($p < .01$), 52 percent of youth with learning disabilities ($p < .001$), and 50 percent of youth with mental retardation ($p < .01$). Youth with visual impairments also are more likely than those with emotional disturbances to score in the high range on the personal autonomy scale (63 percent vs. 39 percent, $p < .01$). Scores on psychological empowerment are in the high range for the majority of youth in all disability categories (from 64 percent of youth with autism to 87 percent of youth with visual impairments), with no significant differences across disability categories.

Table 7. Personal autonomy and psychological empowerment scores of youth, by disability category

Score level	Learning disability	Speech/ 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
	Percent / standard error											
Percentage of youth with scores:												
Personal autonomy												
High	52.1 (4.97)	55.1 (5.00)	50.4 (7.23)	38.9 (5.73)	57.0 (6.70)	63.4 (7.23)	46.5 (6.78)	43.3 (5.53)	22.9 (6.93)	39.2 (9.47)	53.2 (8.87)	37.7 (9.58)
Medium	45.9 (4.96)	43.2 (4.98)	47.2 (7.22)	58.4 (5.79)	41.7 (6.67)	35.9 (7.21)	51.7 (6.79)	56.1 (5.54)	72.1 (7.40)	58.2 (9.57)	46.8 (8.87)	59.9 (9.69)
Low	2.0 (1.39)	1.7 (1.31)	2.4 (2.20)	2.7 (1.91)	1.4 (1.57)	0.7 (1.24)	1.8 (1.81)	0.6 (0.88)	5.1 (3.61)	2.6 (3.09)	#	2.5 (3.06)
Psychological empowerment												
High	84.4 (3.64)	82.8 (3.81)	72.2 (6.48)	85.3 (4.17)	79.6 (5.48)	87.1 (5.06)	82.9 (5.14)	79.6 (4.55)	64.2 (8.09)	83.4 (6.97)	66.8 (8.46)	75.8 (8.81)
Medium	12.2 (3.28)	16.2 (3.72)	22.8 (6.07)	13.5 (4.04)	16.7 (5.07)	11.6 (4.82)	16.5 (5.08)	19.4 (4.46)	34.1 8.00	15.7 (6.82)	32.1 (8.39)	21.6 (8.45)
Low	3.5 (1.83)	1.1 (1.03)	5.0 (3.15)	1.1 (1.25)	3.8 (2.59)	1.4 (1.77)	0.5 (1.00)	1.0 (1.13)	1.7 (2.16)	0.8 (1.70)	1.1 (1.84)	2.7 (3.30)

Rounds to zero.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Special Education Research, National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), youth in-person interviews, 2002 and 2004.

Summary

This chapter reports the self-evaluations of both domain-specific and more general competencies of youth with disabilities. More than half report they are "very good" or "pretty good" in each of five areas: physical/athletic abilities, computer use, mechanical skills, creative arts, and performing arts. Comparison of parents' and youth's perceptions indicates that, overall,

parents tend to report higher opinions of their children's strengths than youth report for themselves. Despite these differences, parents' and youth's perceptions are related to each other in that youth who hold higher estimates of their abilities tend to have parents who also hold high estimates of the youth's abilities and vice versa. Youth also were asked to report on several aspects of their self-advocacy skills. More than half of youth with disabilities report that positive statements reflecting good self-advocacy skills are "very much" like them, and about one-third of youth who identified themselves as persons with disabilities and received services for them report "often" giving their opinions of those services to service providers.

Self-evaluations of the broader concepts of personal autonomy and psychological empowerment, garnered through administration of items selected from those subscales of The Arc's Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer 2000) show that half of youth with disabilities score in the high range for personal autonomy, and more than 8 out of 10 have high scores on the psychological empowerment subscale. NLTS2 investigated whether specific instruction in transition planning for youth or their level of participation in the transition planning process was associated with these scores, but no statistically significant relationships were found.

Although there are no differences in findings associated with youth's gender, age, household income, or race/ethnicity, there are some variations associated with disability category. Youth with visual impairments are more likely than youth in many other disability categories to report confidence in interacting with peers and adults, including confidence in expressing their service needs.