

5. LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

Research has demonstrated that having clear, consistent, and high expectations for students' learning and academic performance plays a key role in student achievement (Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001; Muller & Kerbow, 1993; Newman & Cameto, 1993; Phillips, 1992; Thorkildsen & Stein, 1998). Thus, encouraging parents to hold such expectations is a key message of many parenting education and parent involvement programs (e.g., North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002). Such expectations are no less important for youth with disabilities than for other students, but finding the appropriate balance between high expectations for achievement and a realistic assessment of aptitude and potential, in light of the child's disabilities, may be particularly challenging for these parents.

NLTS2 has investigated the expectations of parents of middle- and high-school-age youth with disabilities regarding their adolescent children's future achievements. Questions about students' future attainment may be difficult to answer because they ask parents to speculate about events that may not occur for several years. Nonetheless, understanding such expectations is important because they can help shape both students' attitudes and behaviors toward their schooling and parents' own actions in support of students' learning. In fact, parents' expectations for youth with disabilities have been shown to be powerfully related to the youth's accomplishments in multiple domains, including postsecondary education and aspects of independence (Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993).

Findings are reported for youth with disabilities as a whole and for those who differ in disability category, age, gender, household income, and race/ethnicity.¹ Comparisons also are made between the expectations of youth with disabilities in NLTS2 and those in the original NLTS, for whom data first were collected in 1987.²

Educational Attainment Expectations

Parents of youth with disabilities were asked how likely they thought it was that their adolescent children with disabilities would reach several education milestones (Exhibit 5-1).³

- ❖ More than half (53%) of youth with disabilities have parents who expect them “definitely” to graduate from high school with a regular high school diploma.
- ❖ Almost one-third (32%) are expected “probably” to graduate from high school with a regular diploma.
- ❖ The remaining 15% of youth are not expected to graduate from high school with a regular diploma.

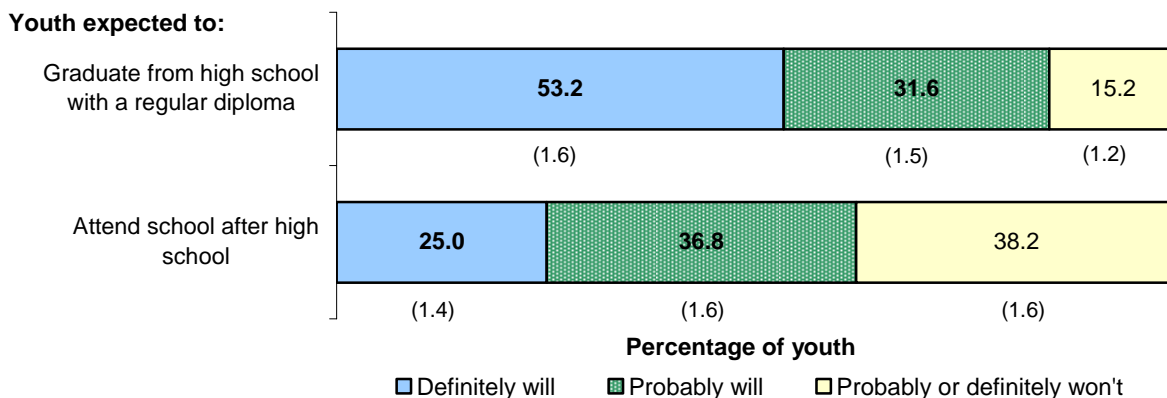
¹ This chapter describes parent expectations for youth with disabilities who were ages 13 through 17 at the time of the parent interview. Findings are weighted estimates of the national population of students receiving special education in the NLTS2 age group, as well as those in each disability category individually. Only differences among groups that reach a level of statistical significance of at least .05 are mentioned in the text.

² Comparisons between NLTS2 and NLTS involve 15- through 17-year-olds, the age group of youth with disabilities that was common to Wave 1 of both studies. For more findings from this comparison, see Wagner, Cameto, and Newman (2003).

³ Possible responses were “definitely will,” “probably will,” “probably won’t,” and “definitely won’t.”

The percentage of parents who expect youth “definitely” to graduate from high school with a regular diploma is similar to actual graduation rates for students with disabilities. In the 1999-2000 school year, 57% of students with disabilities ages 14 to 21 who left school did so by graduating with a regular high school diploma (Office of Special Education Programs, 2001). However, the expectation that 85% “definitely” or “probably” will graduate significantly exceeds the actual graduation rate.

**Exhibit 5-1
PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH’S FUTURE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**



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

Parents are far less confident that youth will attend postsecondary school.⁴

- ❖ One-fourth are expected “definitely” to continue on to postsecondary school.
- ❖ More than one-third (37%) are expected “probably” to further their educations after high school.
- ❖ Postsecondary education for youth with disabilities is considered unlikely for more than one-third of students.

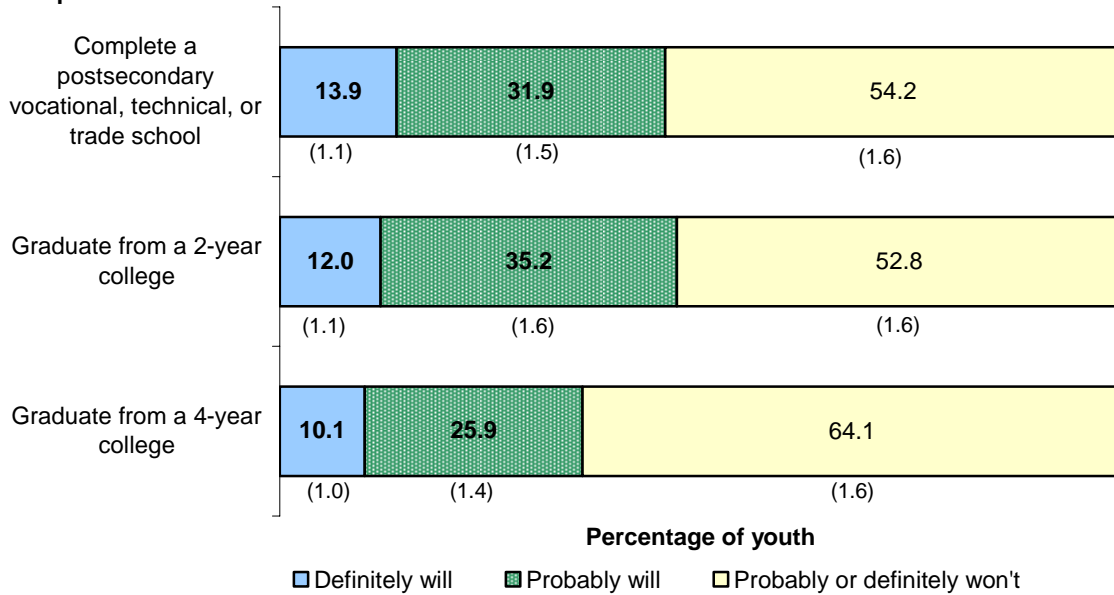
Parents are even less confident that youth will graduate from postsecondary school (Exhibit 5-2).

- ❖ About 14% of youth are expected “definitely” to complete a vocational, technical, or trade school program.
- ❖ Almost one-third are expected “probably” to finish such a program.
- ❖ Expectations regarding graduation from a 2-year college are similar, with 12% expected “definitely” and 35% expected “probably” to graduate.
- ❖ Fewer youth are expected to become 4-year-college graduates: 10% are expected “definitely” to graduate.
- ❖ About one-fourth are expected “probably” to graduate from such an institution.

⁴ The survey did not specify the basis for these assessed expectations. They can be based on a variety of factors, such as assessment of students’ ability or family’s or student’s capacity to pay college tuition.

Exhibit 5-2
PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH'S FUTURE POSTSECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION

Youth expected to:



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

Similar to expectations regarding high school graduation, expectations about “definitely” attending a postsecondary program are comparable to actual rates of postsecondary education enrollment. The original NLTS demonstrated that, in 1990, 27% of youth with disabilities who had been out of secondary school 3 to 5 years had been enrolled in some kind of postsecondary institution since leaving high school (Marder, 1992). Enrollment in a 4-year college or university was much less common; 4% had done so in the 3 to 5 years since leaving high school.

Youth with disabilities are much less likely to be expected to attend school after high school than are their peers in the general population. Although parents of 62% of youth with disabilities have some expectation that youth will continue on to postsecondary education, almost 92% of peers in the general population have parents who expect them to continue their education after high school.⁵

Parents of youth with disabilities also are markedly less positive than other parents about youth’s graduating from a 4-year college; 36% of those with disabilities are expected “definitely” or “probably” to complete a 4-year college program, whereas 88% of their peers in the general population are expected to receive a 4-year college diploma.

Despite lower expectations for youth with disabilities than for those in the general population, parents’ expectations have increased over time regarding some aspects of postsecondary education. Comparisons of parents’ expectations for 15- through 17-year-olds with disabilities in 1987 and 2001 show a 10-percentage-point increase in expectations that youth with disabilities “definitely” will complete a 2-year college program, which is

⁵ Figures for the general population were calculated from the 1999 National Household Education Survey. Data are for 13- to 17-year-olds.

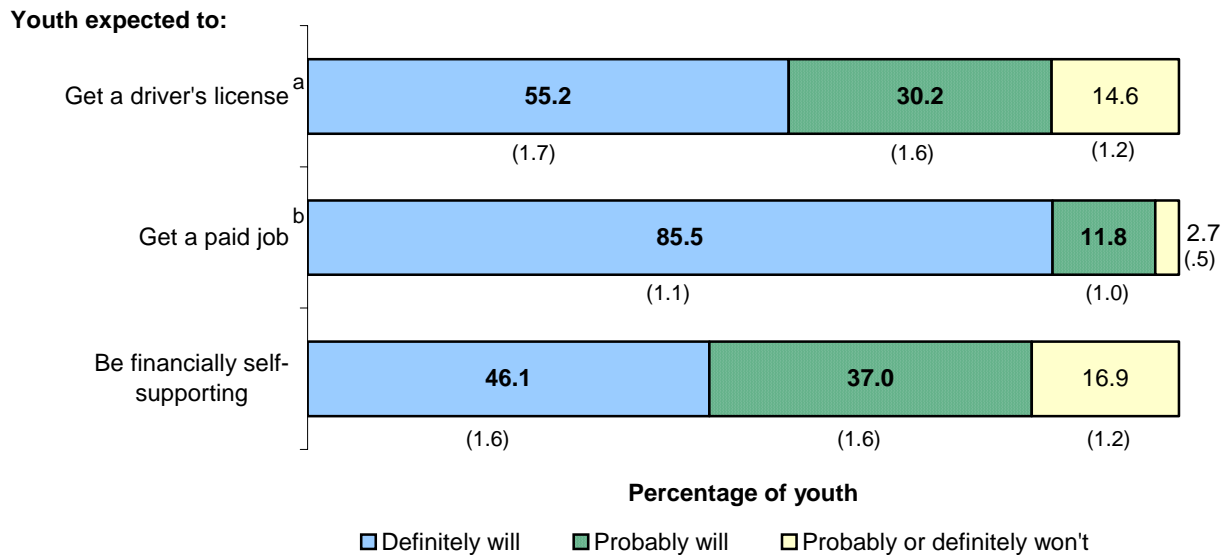
accompanied by a 13-percentage-point decline in expectations that youth “definitely” or “probably” will not do so (Wagner, Cameto, et al., 2003). This increase is apparent in spite of parents’ being no more likely to expect youth with disabilities to receive a regular high school diploma than previously. Expectations for other aspects of postsecondary educational attainment also have not changed significantly.

Independence Expectations

In addition to their expectations regarding the educational attainment of youth, parents of youth with disabilities were asked how likely they think it is that youth will achieve several milestones of independence: getting a driver’s license, finding paid employment, being financially self-sufficient, and living independently. Parents differ markedly in their expectations regarding the future independence of their children with disabilities across these dimensions of independence (Exhibit 5-3).

- ❖ Somewhat more than half of youth with disabilities (55%) who do not already have a driver’s license or learner’s permit are expected “definitely” to get a driver’s license in the future.
- ❖ Another 30% are thought “probably” to be able to earn driving privileges.

**Exhibit 5-3
PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH’S FUTURE DRIVING, EMPLOYMENT,
AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE**



Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^a Youth who have a driver's license are included as "definitely will."

^b Youth who have had a paid job are included as "definitely will."

Standard errors are in parentheses.

Expectations for paid employment are considerably higher, dramatically exceeding expectations for any other aspect of education or independence.

- ❖ The large majority of youth with disabilities (86%) are expected “definitely” to be able to get a paid job in the future.

This high expectation may reflect the actual experience of youth in working for pay outside the home; 63% already have done so. Further, expectations for the future employment of youth with disabilities have increased over time. Comparisons of parents' expectations for youth with disabilities in 1987 and 2001 show a 9-percentage-point increase in expectations that youth "definitely" will find paid employment in the future (Wagner, Cameto, et al., 2003).

However, parents are less certain that these jobs will pay enough for youth to be financially self-sufficient.

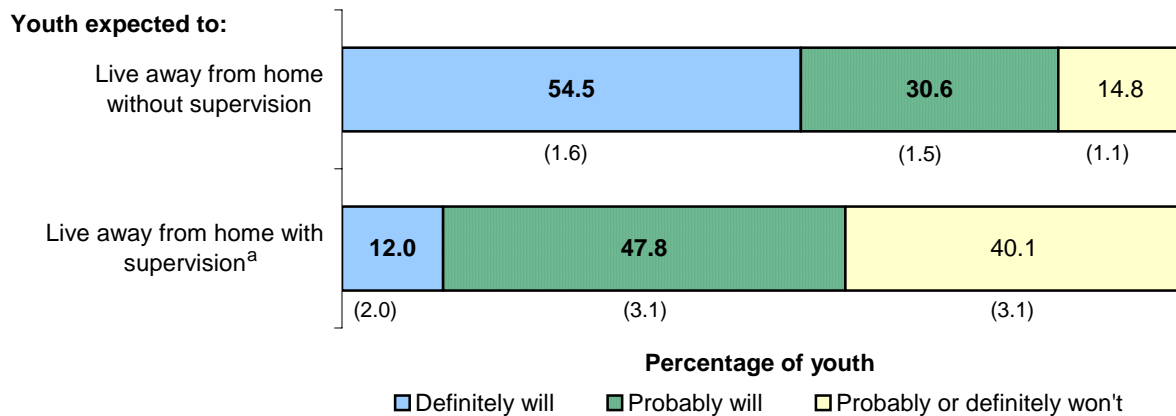
- ❖ Fewer than half of youth (46%) are expected "definitely" to be able to support themselves financially, without family or government support.
- ❖ Just over one-third (37%) are thought "probably" to be able to be financially self-sufficient.

Expectations for residential independence are similar to those for financial independence (Exhibit 5-4).

- ❖ Independent living is thought "definitely" to be in the futures of 54% of youth with disabilities.
- ❖ About one in seven youth (15%) are thought "probably" or "definitely" not to be able to live unsupervised in the future.
- ❖ Among youth who are thought not to be able to live independently without supervision, even having supervision is not expected to result in independence for many; 40% are not expected to live away from home even with supervision.
- ❖ About one in eight youth who (12%) are not expected to achieve unsupervised residential independence are expected "definitely" to be able to live away from home with supervision.

Parents' expectations regarding residential independence have not changed markedly over time.

**Exhibit 5-4
PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH'S FUTURE RESIDENTIAL INDEPENDENCE**



Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^a Asked only of parents who do not think youth will live away from home without supervision. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Disability Differences in Family Expectations

There are notable differences in expectations regarding the future educational attainment and independence of youth in different disability categories.

Educational Attainment

Parents of students with learning disabilities or with speech/language, hearing, or visual impairments hold higher expectations for their children's graduation from high school than do parents of students in other disability categories.

- ❖ Approximately two-thirds of youth with visual, hearing, or speech impairments are expected "definitely" to graduate from high school with a regular diploma, as are 60% of those with learning disabilities (Exhibit 5-5).

These youth also have among the highest actual rates of graduating from high school with a regular diploma (e.g., 62% and 66% of students with learning disabilities or speech/language impairments, respectively; OSEP, 2001).

- ❖ Expectations for postsecondary education enrollment also are relatively high for youth with speech/language or hearing and visual impairments (42%, 45%, and 45% respectively, expected "definitely" to pursue postsecondary education); however, students with learning disabilities are not expected to do so with the same frequency (28%, $p < .001$).

In fact, earlier research has shown that between 30% and 60% of youth in these categories had enrolled in postsecondary education 3 to 5 years after high school (Marder, 1992), with youth with learning disabilities having the lowest rate among these groups.

- ❖ Youth with speech/language, hearing, or visual impairments are the most frequently expected to graduate from a 2-year college (20%, 23%, and 20%, respectively, "definitely will") or a 4-year college (23%, 20%, and 25%, respectively, "definitely will").

Previous postsecondary enrollment rates 3 to 5 years after secondary school for these categories of youth ranged from 9% to 13% (Marder, 1992).

**Exhibit 5-5
PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH'S FUTURE EDUCATION,
BY DISABILITY CATEGORY**

	Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impairment	Mental Retardation	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Visual Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabilities	Deaf-Blindness
Percentage expected to:												
Graduate from high school with a regular diploma												
Definitely will	59.5 (2.4)	66.1 (2.4)	28.9 (2.3)	43.1 (2.6)	68.0 (2.7)	68.2 (3.3)	53.7 (2.8)	54.9 (2.4)	28.5 (2.5)	53.5 (4.6)	26.1 (2.4)	41.4 (5.0)
Definitely or probably won't	9.5 (1.5)	8.1 (1.4)	35.8 (2.4)	19.6 (2.1)	0.1 (1.7)	15.8 (2.6)	22.0 (2.3)	12.1 (1.6)	47.8 (2.7)	21.5 (3.8)	51.5 (2.7)	38.0 (5.0)
Get any postsecondary education												
Definitely will	27.6 (2.2)	42.4 (2.5)	10.5 (1.6)	18.7 (2.0)	45.3 (2.9)	45.0 (3.6)	31.1 (2.6)	27.1 (2.1)	14.0 (1.9)	21.7 (3.9)	10.2 (1.7)	20.8 (4.1)
Definitely or probably won't	33.0 (2.3)	22.0 (2.1)	63.8 (2.5)	41.7 (2.6)	19.8 (2.3)	25.5 (3.1)	36.0 (2.7)	35.9 (2.3)	62.2 (2.7)	35.3 (4.5)	70.1 (2.5)	54.2 (5.0)
Complete postsecondary vocational, technical, or trade school												
Definitely will	15.3 (1.8)	16.6 (1.9)	7.6 (1.4)	12.8 (1.8)	22.7 (2.5)	15.3 (2.6)	14.5 (2.0)	12.3 (1.6)	7.3 (1.4)	19.4 (3.8)	7.7 (1.5)	8.4 (2.8)
Definitely or probably won't	50.0 (2.5)	51.6 (2.5)	70.2 (2.4)	54.8 (2.6)	44.1 (2.9)	55.8 (3.6)	56.3 (2.8)	57.7 (2.4)	74.3 (2.4)	45.7 (4.8)	78.9 (2.2)	70.3 (4.6)
Complete 2-year college												
Definitely will	12.9 (1.7)	20.2 (2.0)	5.4 (1.2)	10.8 (1.6)	22.9 (2.5)	20.5 (3.0)	16.1 (2.1)	12.1 (1.6)	5.9 (1.3)	10.3 (2.9)	5.2 (1.2)	11.8 (3.3)
Definitely or probably won't	47.7 (2.5)	43.2 (2.5)	75.3 (2.2)	55.1 (2.6)	41.3 (2.9)	44.6 (3.6)	52.8 (2.8)	54.0 (2.4)	73.3 (2.5)	49.8 (4.8)	80.9 (2.2)	68.8 (4.7)
Complete 4-year college												
Definitely will	10.7 (1.6)	23.3 (2.2)	3.0 (.9)	8.6 (1.5)	20.2 (2.4)	25.0 (3.1)	14.8 (2.0)	10.9 (1.5)	5.7 (1.3)	6.2 (2.4)	2.6 (.9)	12.8 (3.4)
Definitely or probably won't	59.7 (2.5)	44.9 (2.6)	84.6 (1.9)	70.3 (2.4)	43.1 (3.0)	39.6 (3.5)	61.8 (2.8)	63.7 (2.4)	80.8 (2.2)	68.5 (4.6)	88.8 (1.7)	72.5 (4.6)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^a Youth who have a driver's license are included as "definitely will."

^b Youth who have had a paid job are included as "definitely will."

^c Asked only of parents who do not think youth will live away from home without supervision.

The category "probably will" is omitted from the exhibit and accounts for differences in percentage between 100% and the sum of percentages for "definitely will" and "definitely or probably won't."

Standard errors are in parentheses.

- ❖ Youth with hearing impairments (23%) or traumatic brain injuries (19%) are the most likely to be expected "definitely" to enroll in a postsecondary vocational or technical program.
- ❖ Youth with mental retardation, autism, or multiple disabilities are the least likely to be expected to graduate from high school with a regular diploma or to attend postsecondary school (36%, 48%, 52%, respectively, "definitely or probably won't" graduate from high school with a regular diploma).

In actuality, even more youth in these categories do not receive regular high school diplomas (e.g., 60% of those with mental retardation; OSEP, 2001).

- ❖ From 62% to 70% of youth with mental retardation, autism, or multiple disabilities are not expected to pursue education after high school, and even higher percentages are thought unlikely to graduate from technical, 2-year, or 4-year postsecondary schools.

Independence

Expectations for the future independence of youth with disabilities also differ widely across disability categories (Exhibit 5-6).

- ❖ On all dimensions of independence, youth with learning disabilities or speech impairments are the most likely to be expected “definitely” to attain independence milestones.
- ❖ More than 60% of those with learning disabilities or speech impairments are expected “definitely” to earn a driver’s license, and 92% and 87%, respectively, are expected to find paid employment in the future.

Youth with learning disabilities or speech impairments also are among those categories most likely to have a driver’s license or learner’s permit and paid employment.

High employment expectations also are apparent for youth with other health or hearing impairments or emotional disturbances.

- ❖ Seven out of eight (87%) of those with other health impairments, 83% of those with emotional disturbances, and 82% of those with hearing impairments are expected “definitely” to be employed.
- ❖ Despite high employment expectations, students with other health or hearing impairments or emotional disturbances are less likely to be expected to support themselves (44%, 45%, and 39%, respectively) than are those with learning disabilities (53%; $p < .05$ for comparison with other health and hearing impairments, and $p < .001$ for emotional disturbances) or those with speech impairments (58%; $p < .001$ for all three comparisons).

Exhibit 5-6
PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH'S FUTURE INDEPENDENCE,
BY DISABILITY CATEGORY

	Learning Disability	Speech/ Language Impairment	Mental Retardation	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Visual Impairment	Orthopedic Impairment	Other Health Impairment	Autism	Traumatic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabilities	Deaf-Blindness
Percentage expected to:												
Get a driver's license^a												
Definitely will	66.6 (2.6)	61.8 (2.6)	23.8 (2.3)	51.9 (2.8)	55.8 (3.3)	.3 (.4)	21.4 (2.4)	56.3 (2.7)	12.3 (1.8)	43.3 (5.0)	14.0 (1.9)	.0
Definitely or probably won't	5.6 (1.3)	6.7 (1.3)	39.8 (2.6)	9.9 (1.7)	11.0 (2.1)	99.3 (.6)	50.1 (2.9)	9.9 (1.6)	66.8 (2.6)	26.3 (4.4)	69.6 (2.5)	99.4 (.8)
Get a paid job^b												
Definitely will	91.6 (1.4)	86.8 (1.7)	67.1 (2.4)	83.3 (1.9)	82.4 (2.2)	77.2 (3.0)	59.9 (2.7)	87.1 (1.6)	44.7 (2.7)	75.6 (4.0)	46.8 (2.7)	52.9 (5.1)
Definitely or probably won't	.5 (.3)	.9 (.5)	9.6 (1.5)	2.7 (.8)	1.1 (.6)	7.6 (1.9)	11.5 (1.8)	1.4 (.6)	16.8 (2.0)	2.6 (1.5)	27.2 (2.4)	18.4 (4.0)
Be financially self-supporting												
Definitely will	52.8 (2.5)	57.9 (2.5)	25.2 (2.3)	38.8 (2.6)	44.9 (2.9)	33.4 (3.5)	22.6 (2.4)	44.0 (2.4)	9.9 (1.7)	28.9 (4.4)	11.5 (1.8)	16.2 (3.8)
Definitely or probably won't	8.2 (1.4)	8.6 (1.4)	45.9 (2.6)	21.7 (2.2)	15.0 (2.1)	25.7 (3.2)	44.3 (2.9)	17.6 (1.8)	64.9 (2.7)	26.4 (4.2)	70.9 (2.6)	57.4 (5.1)
Live independently without supervision												
Definitely will	63.3 (2.4)	62.2 (2.4)	24.1 (2.2)	47.7 (2.6)	57.8 (2.9)	39.7 (3.5)	27.5 (2.5)	56.7 (2.4)	11.7 (1.8)	34.6 (4.5)	15.7 (2.0)	20.1 (4.1)
Definitely or probably won't	7.4 (1.3)	9.5 (1.5)	42.0 (2.5)	15.8 (1.9)	11.4 (1.9)	25.3 (3.2)	41.8 (2.8)	11.7 (1.5)	62.7 (2.7)	24.9 (4.1)	64.3 (2.6)	53.1 (5.1)
Live independently with supervision^c												
Definitely will	10.3 (5.1)	9.3 (4.2)	11.5 (2.5)	15.2 (4.6)	11.0 (4.9)	14.2 (4.3)	11.6 (2.8)	14.2 (4.8)	15.6 (2.5)	5.1 (3.9)	15.4 (2.3)	10.4 (4.2)
Definitely or probably won't	40.6 (8.3)	34.9 (6.9)	41.4 (3.9)	35.5 (6.1)	34.5 (7.4)	38.5 (6.0)	43.0 (4.4)	38.7 (6.7)	31.8 (3.2)	25.1 (7.7)	44.8 (3.2)	50.5 (6.9)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^a Youth who have a driver's license are included as "definitely will."

^b Youth who have had a paid job are included as "definitely will."

^c Asked only of parents who do not think youth will live away from home without supervision.

The category "probably will" is omitted from the exhibit and accounts for differences in percentage between 100% and the sum of percentages for "definitely will" and "definitely or probably won't."

Standard errors are in parentheses.

Independence presents challenges to some categories of youth for whom expectations for educational attainment are high.

- ❖ Youth with visual impairments are among the most likely to be expected to complete college, but they are less likely than several other categories of youth to be expected "definitely" to achieve financial independence, despite their likelihood of postsecondary degrees.
- ❖ The visual limitations they and their peers with deaf-blindness experience also mean that virtually none of them who are not already driving are expected to do so in the future.

- ❖ As was true for educational expectations, youth with mental retardation, autism, multiple disabilities, and deaf-blindness are the most likely to have parents who think they “definitely” or “probably” will not achieve the aspects of independence investigated in NLTS2.

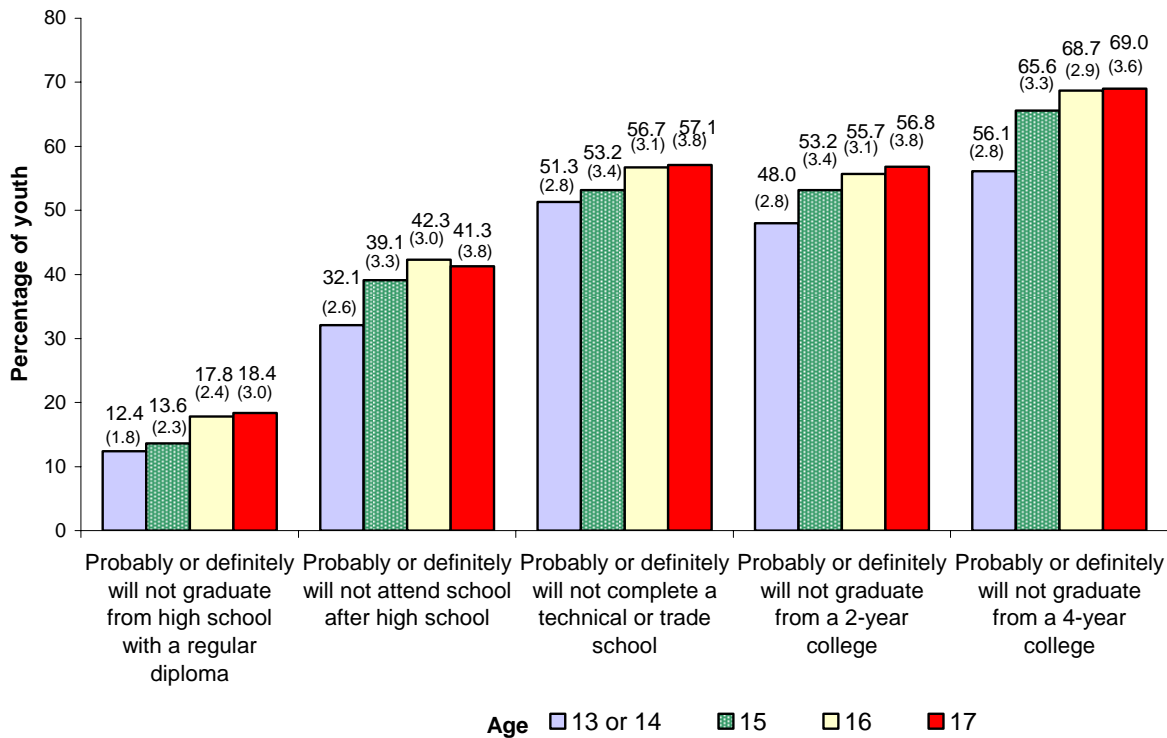
Demographic Differences in Expectations

Gender. There are no significant differences between boys and girls in their parents’ expectations for their future educational attainment or most aspects of independence. However, boys are more likely to have parents who expect they “definitely” will be financially independent (49% vs. 40%, $p < .01$), despite there being no differences in expectations for employment of boys and girls with disabilities.

Age. Expectations for students’ postsecondary educational attainment generally are lower for older students (Exhibit 5-7).

- ❖ Seventeen-year-olds are significantly more likely than 13- and 14-year-olds not to be expected to attend school after high school (41% vs. 32%, $p < .05$) or to graduate from a 4-year college (69% vs. 56%, $p < .01$).

Exhibit 5-7
PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH’S FUTURE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, BY AGE



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

These lower expectations for older students continue a pattern observed for elementary and middle school students with disabilities (Newman, Wagner, & Guzman, 2002). For example, only 6% of students ages 6 to 8 are not expected to graduate from high school, compared with

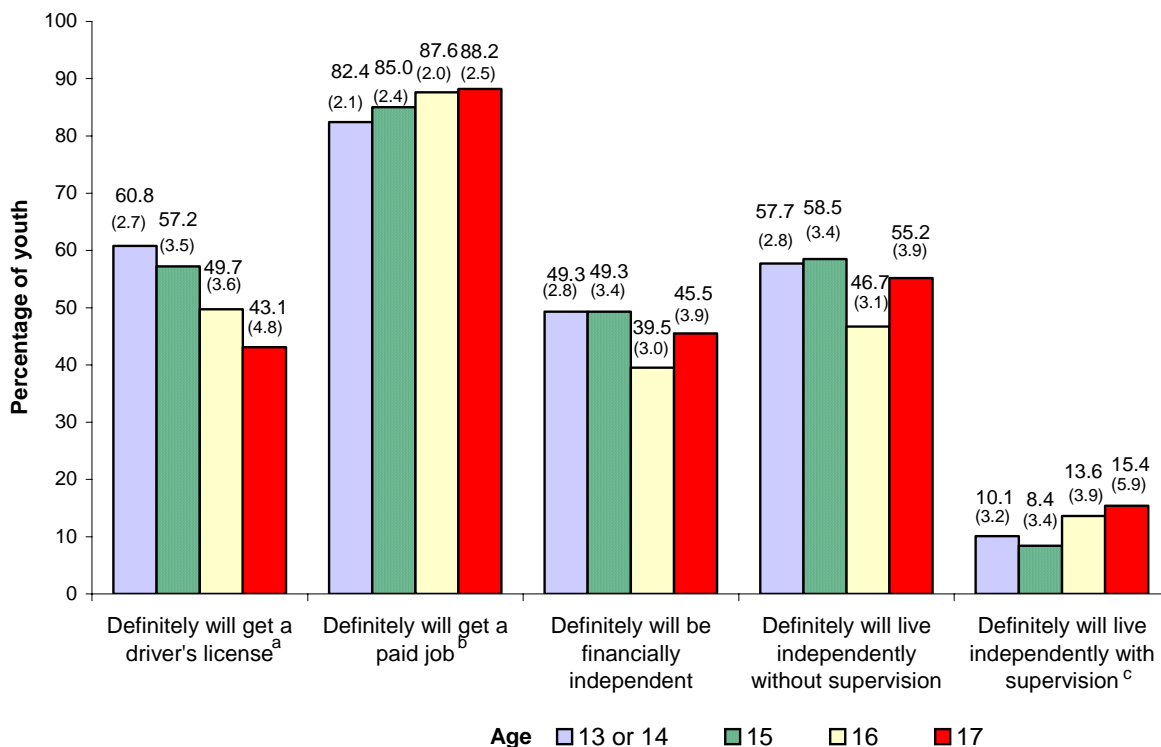
18% of 17-year-olds ($p < .001$). Similarly, only 18% of younger students are not expected to attend postsecondary school, compared with 41% of 17-year-olds ($p < .001$).

It is unclear whether these differences in expectations between age groups result from a decline in expectations as students age and their abilities to take on complex educational activities are more clearly demonstrated, or from the different mix of disabilities between older and younger students receiving special education. For example, younger students include a higher proportion of those with speech/language impairments, whose parents also hold relatively high expectations for their educational attainment.

Age-related differences regarding independence are less consistent in direction than those for postsecondary education (Exhibit 5-8).

- ❖ Youth with disabilities who are 17 years old are less likely than their 13- or 14-year-old peers to be expected “definitely” to get a driver’s license (43% vs. 61%, $p < .01$).
- ❖ Expectations for the financial and residential independence of youth are similar for 17-year-olds and those aged 13 through 15, but are lower for 16-year-olds.

Exhibit 5-8
PARENTS’ EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH’S FUTURE INDEPENDENCE, BY AGE



Source: NLS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^a Asked only of parents of youth who did not already have a driver’s license or learner’s permit.

^b Youth who have had a paid job are included as “definitely will.”

^c Asked only of parents who do not think youth would live away from home without supervision. Standard errors are in parentheses.

Youth with disabilities of different ages have parents with similar expectations regarding the likelihood that they will find future paid employment, probably because many older youth already have experience with paid employment. When considering only youth who have never had a paid job, however, older youth are less likely than their younger peers to be “definitely” expected to eventually get paid employment. Not shown in this exhibit is the finding that youth who are 17 years old and have never been employed are less likely to be expected to “definitely” get a paid job (44%) than their 15-year-old (64%, $p < .05$) and 13- or 14-year-old peers (66%, $p < .01$).

Household income and race/ethnicity. Parents of youth from lower-income households generally hold lower expectations for their children’s educational attainment than do parents from higher-income households (Exhibit 5-9).

- ❖ Of youth in households with incomes of \$25,000 or less, 41% are expected “definitely” to graduate from high school with a regular diploma, compared with 63% of those in households with incomes of more than \$50,000 ($p < .001$).
- ❖ One in five (20%) are expected “definitely” to attend postsecondary school, compared with 30% of those in households with incomes of more than \$50,000 ($p < .001$).

Lower expectations for postsecondary education for youth in lower-income households may reflect parents’ acknowledgment of the difficulty of affording college or the generally lower graduation rates in many schools with large proportions of low-income students. However, these income-related differences are not reflected in expectations for graduation from a postsecondary school.

Mirroring income differences, parents’ expectations for graduation from high school with a regular diploma are higher for white youth with disabilities and lower for African-American youth.

- ❖ More than half (56%) of white students are expected “definitely” to graduate with a regular diploma, compared with 48% of African-American students ($p < .05$).

Earlier research suggests that their actual rates of graduation do not differ significantly (Wagner et al., 1991).

In contrast, parents of white youth have lower expectations for postsecondary education opportunities than do parents of Hispanic youth.

- ❖ 42% of white youth with disabilities are not expected to attend a postsecondary school, 59% are not expected to graduate from 2-year college, and 71% are not expected to graduate from a 4-year college, compared with 23%, 36%, and 43% of Hispanic students ($p < .05$, $.01$, and $.001$, respectively).
- ❖ White students also are less likely to be expected to graduate from a 4-year college than are their African-American peers (71% vs. 56% “probably” or “definitely won’t”, $p < .001$).

Exhibit 5-9
PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH'S FUTURE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT,
BY INCOME AND RACE/ETHNICITY

	Income			Race/Ethnicity		
	\$25,000 or Less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African- American	Hispanic
Percentage expected to:						
Graduate from high school						
Definitely will	40.7 (2.6)	56.3 (3.0)	63.3 (2.9)	56.4 (2.0)	48.5 (3.5)	47.2 (4.6)
Probably or definitely won't	16.5 (2.0)	16.3 (2.2)	12.9 (2.0)	14.5 (1.4)	17.3 (2.6)	13.6 (3.1)
Attend school after high school						
Definitely will	19.7 (2.1)	23.1 (2.5)	30.4 (2.8)	23.0 (1.7)	29.0 (3.2)	27.8 (4.1)
Probably or definitely won't	41.8 (2.6)	40.5 (2.9)	33.0 (2.8)	42.2 (2.0)	34.6 (3.3)	23.4 (3.9)
Complete a postsecondary vocational, technical, or trade school						
Definitely will	11.5 (1.7)	15.3 (2.2)	13.6 (2.1)	12.3 (1.4)	14.3 (2.5)	17.6 (3.6)
Probably or definitely won't	51.4 (2.7)	55.0 (3.0)	55.9 (3.0)	59.8 (2.0)	47.1 (3.5)	39.4 (4.5)
Graduate from a 2-year college						
Definitely will	11.6 (1.7)	9.4 (1.8)	13.9 (2.1)	9.4 (1.2)	14.9 (2.5)	18.1 (3.6)
Probably or definitely won't	54.6 (2.7)	53.6 (3.0)	51.1 (3.0)	58.7 (2.0)	46.2 (3.5)	36.3 (4.5)
Graduate from a 4-year college						
Definitely will	8.3 (1.5)	8.9 (1.7)	12.9 (2.1)	8.4 (1.2)	13.6 (2.5)	11.8 (3.1)
Probably or definitely won't	66.0 (2.6)	66.9 (2.9)	61.4 (3.0)	71.3 (1.9)	55.6 (3.5)	43.4 (4.7)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^a Youth who have a driver's license are included as "definitely will."

^b Asked only of parents who do not think youth would live away from home without supervision.

The category "probably will" is omitted from the exhibit and accounts for differences in percentage between 100% and the sum of percentages for "definitely will" and "definitely or probably won't."

Standard errors are in parentheses.

These differences in expectations favoring minority youth run counter to actual postsecondary completion rates in the general population, which indicate higher graduation rates for white youth. For example, 33% of white individuals 25 to 29 years old in the general population have a bachelor's degree, compared with 18% of African-Americans and 11% of Hispanics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Expectations for independence of all kinds are lower for youth with disabilities from households with lower incomes (Exhibit 5-10). Differences are most pronounced regarding residential independence.

Exhibit 5-10
PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS FOR YOUTH'S FUTURE INDEPENDENCE,
BY INCOME AND RACE/ETHNICITY

	Income			Race/Ethnicity		
	\$25,000 or Less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African- American	Hispanic
Percentage expected to:						
Get a driver's license ^a						
Definitely will	49.0 (2.7)	59.5 (3.2)	60.5 (3.4)	57.8 (2.3)	50.8 (3.6)	52.8 (4.8)
Definitely or probably won't	15.4 (2.0)	13.6 (2.2)	13.1 (2.3)	14.7 (1.6)	14.5 (2.5)	12.8 (3.2)
Get a paid job ^b						
Definitely will	76.7 (2.2)	89.9 (1.8)	91.9 (1.6)	89.0 (1.3)	79.7 (2.8)	78.0 (3.7)
Definitely or probably won't	4.1 (1.0)	2.3 (.9)	1.5 (.7)	2.5 (.6)	3.4 (1.2)	2.6 (1.4)
Be financially self-supporting						
Definitely will	34.5 (2.5)	47.4 (3.0)	55.4 (3.0)	48.8 (2.1)	41.7 (3.5)	40.4 (4.5)
Definitely or probably won't	22.2 (2.2)	14.5 (2.1)	14.1 (2.1)	16.8 (1.6)	18.5 (2.7)	14.2 (3.2)
Live independently without supervision						
Definitely will	38.4 (2.6)	58.6 (2.9)	67.3 (2.8)	62.1 (2.0)	43.0 (3.4)	38.4 (4.5)
Definitely or probably won't	21.9 (2.2)	11.8 (1.9)	10.2 (1.8)	11.6 (1.3)	20.8 (2.8)	19.6 (3.6)
Live independently with supervision ^c						
Definitely will	7.5 (2.5)	14.5 (4.1)	15.4 (4.9)	13.5 (2.7)	8.9 (4.0)	14.1 (5.5)
Definitely or probably won't	42.7 (4.7)	50.3 (5.9)	26.8 (6.0)	36.5 (3.8)	43.1 (6.9)	47.1 (7.9)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^a Youth who have a driver's license are included as "definitely will."

^b Youth who have had a paid job are included as "definitely will."

^c Asked only of parents who do not think youth would live away from home without supervision.

The category "probably will" is omitted from the exhibit and accounts for differences in percentage between 100% and the sum of percentages for "definitely will" and "definitely or probably won't."

Standard errors are in parentheses.

- ❖ Two-thirds (67%) of students with disabilities in households with incomes greater than \$50,000 are expected "definitely" to live away from home without supervision, compared with 38% of those in households with incomes of \$25,000 or less ($p < .001$).

Differences among racial/ethnic groups are less consistent. For example, there are no significant differences among groups regarding getting a driver's license or future paid employment or financial independence, despite white youth's being significantly more likely to have actual experience with driving privileges and paid employment (Wagner, Marder, Blackorby, et al., 2003). However, white youth with disabilities are much more likely than African-American or Hispanic youth to be expected "definitely" to live independently (62% vs. 43% and 38%, $p < .001$).

Summary

A majority of youth with disabilities, but not all, have parents who expect them to experience future success in many aspects of education and independence.

- ◆ Their parents expect that 85% or more “definitely” or “probably” will graduate from high school with a regular diploma and live independently.
- ◆ Although virtually all youth are expected to be able to find paid employment, fewer than two-thirds are expected to further their education after high school.
- ◆ More than four out of five youth are expected to achieve financial independence.
- ◆ Expectations regarding completing a 2-year college program and finding paid employment have increased for youth with disabilities since 1987, yet expectations for educational attainment lag behind those of youth in the general population.
- ◆ Parents of about 15% of youth with disabilities do not expect them to receive a regular high school diploma or to live independently; nearly two out of five are not expected to pursue postsecondary education.

As with most aspects of youth’s experiences, these expectations are not shared equally by all youth with disabilities.

- ◆ Lower expectations are particularly common for youth with mental retardation, autism, multiple disabilities, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, deaf-blindness.
- ◆ Expectations also generally are lower for youth with disabilities from lower-income households.

The longitudinal design of NLTS2 permits the monitoring of the progress of youth with disabilities in their future pursuits and an assessment of the extent to which the expectations of their parents are borne out.

This chapter has examined the expectations for their children’s future achievements of parents of secondary-school-age youth with disabilities. Chapter 6 describes the relationships of parental expectations and family involvement to student outcomes.