



Parent and Youth Perspectives of Youths' Strengths

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About the study

The ROAD Ahead Study focuses on high school students on the autism spectrum who will graduate high school with a regular diploma. The study is funded by U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

During this phase of the study, we are conducting a study with parents and students on the autism spectrum during their last year of high school. We will follow up with these participants 18 months later. The goal of this phase of the research is to find out what skills or services are important to develop while in high school to optimize success after high school.

About this report

As we conduct our research, we will share information that may be beneficial or interesting to school personnel, families, and students. Reports will be published on [our website](#).

During this phase of the study, parents and youth completed mailed and online surveys. One of the surveys asked parents and youth to describe **"the best things" about the youth**. We have summarized the responses below for the participants thus far. We will update this report when this part of data collection is complete, and post it on the project website.

We hope you find this information inspiring. Thank you for your participation!



Who participated in the survey?

Since the Fall of 2017, 27 families have completed the first phase of the study. Youth participants ranged in age from 16 to 19 years old. Most youth reported that they were male (81%). All students were preparing to graduate and receive a regular high school diploma within a year.

Most of the families who have participated self-identified as white (76%), with a few families reporting Asian, Latino or more than one racial/ethnic background.

All parent participants were mothers, who were between 40 and 58 years old. Most of these mothers had attended college. Families had a median annual household income between \$100,000-129,999. Most families lived in a suburban community; five families lived in an urban area, and one family was from a rural community.

Parent Perspectives about their High Schoolers

The "best things" about my high schooler are...



They have a great sense of humor.

- "He is **fun** to be with, caring and interesting to talk to."
- "He's **funny**, smart. He has a great memory for subjects of interest. He listens, is polite, and a hard worker."
- "He is **funny**, engaging, and extremely articulate."
- "He is **funny** and warm. He really cares about people. He gets upset when others are hurt. He is friendly and not shy about talking to new people at first."
- "She is interesting, engaging, **funny**, kind, and empathetic. Her art and writing is amazing! She can capture the essence of complex topics and can communicate the heart of it - without judgement and for the good of all - I know that sounds like a superhero -but just meet her!"
- "He has many great skills - musical ability, perfect pitch, mathematical abilities. He is gentle, has a caring nature, and a **sense of humor**."
- "He is intelligent, honest, sweet, strong faith, incredible musical talent, handsome, **funny**."
- "[She] is determined, empathetic, kind, extremely bright, creative, focused and **sarcastic**."
- "**Sense of humor**, very clever, caring and gentle with people and elderly, just starting to figure out life for age-appropriate interests."
- "Excellent at memorizing, developing **a funny sense of humor**. Gifted at science. Has a big heart for animals. Very much a rule follower. Can be trusted not to cheat or break rules, drink, or do drugs."
- "Kind, smart, **infectious giggle**, cuddler."

They are smart.



- "He is **very smart**, especially with computers. He works very hard for good grades. He cooperates well in school, and always likes to help others who need help."
- "She is **brilliant!** She is great at writing stories. She has backstories for nearly everything, most commonly while she's playing the Sims. She has a quirky sense of humor and she is **witty**."
- "He is **very intelligent**, loving, athletic, and strong minded."
- "He is **smart**, thoughtful, funny, neat, and always on time. He is a hard worker, curious, has a **great memory**, is an exceptionally fast typist, and is always respectful and polite."
- "He is very **smart** and gets things done and taken care of."
- "He is **intuitive** and able to express himself with an extensive vocabulary. He has great self-awareness. He is kind, thoughtful, and loyal to those who have earned his trust."
- "**Smart**. He is a science lover. He has a great sense of humor."
- "He is **Intelligent**, honest, sweet, has strong faith, has incredible musical talent, is handsome, and funny."
- "He is **very intelligent**, artistic, compassionate."
- "**Smart!** Creative + thinks out of the box. Has more knowledge about a wide range of topics than anyone I know."

Parent Perspectives about their High Schoolers, Continued

They are kind.



"He is **very nice** to younger people - very helpful and loves animals. If he learns anything, he is very good with it. He follows rules and respects authority."

"Our son is **very sweet, caring** and loves to be helpful. He has a very strong character. He is also extremely intelligent and loves to learn. He has a way of getting all the people who work with him to care deeply about him."

"He is **kind**, hardworking, smart, and a good kid. He never gives us problems."

"He is **kind, considerate**, loyal, honest, loving, and has a great sense of humor."

"There are so many things that are the best about him. He is **sweet and kind**. He is funny and happy. He is smart and articulate. He is **compassionate** and loving. He is focused and hard working. He is unique and detail oriented. He is the greatest kid."

"He is **kind, smart**, funny, and concerned about the world."

"He is **kind, friendly**, and has a great memory. He is a good piano player and has good writing skills."

"He is **sweet, helpful, thoughtful**, and good with babies."

"He is logical, **kind, compassionate**, and an **innately good person**."

"He is **incredibly kind-hearted** and wants nothing more than to please people."

"She is easy to get along with, helpful, loving, caring, **willing to help others** with their problems..."

"Excellent drawer; Although hard on herself, **very kind to others**."

"He **loves** his family."

They work hard.



"He is very kind and gentle hearted. He is a **hard worker** and when he is motivated he will put forth great effort. He is very cooperative and wants to please others."

"He is very motivated and driven by success. He **never quits**. He just **tries harder**."

"She likes to be punctual in everything. She **doing so well at school**. She's on the honor roll. Sometime when she is in good mood, she gives a hug."

"He is very persistent. When he wants to learn how to do something he **does not give up even when frustrated**. He does not procrastinate. He is athletic. He likes to keep things tidy. He does not collect clutter."

"He is creative, loves art (painting, drawing, etc.), loves to build with Legos, has a desire to please adults (mom, dad, teachers, brother, etc.), is compliant with everything he's asked to do, and **perseveres through challenges**."

"He is incredibly astute, intelligent, **hard-working**, and pure-hearted person."

"She is a **talented musician**, loyal friend, sweet and smart."

Youths' Perspectives about Themselves

The "best things" about me...



I have a great sense of humor.



- "I am **Funny** and kind to others."
- "I'm **funny**, honest, and kind."
- "I'm **funny**, a hard worker and smart."
- "I am **hilarious**, have cool hair, and am good with animals."
- "I am smart, intuitive, caring, **great sense of humor** and **funny**."

I am smart.



- "I have a **knack for learning** and consider myself to be a good person."
- "I am very **smart**, funny, and motivated."
- "I am very **smart**. I am able to get my school work done."
- "I have a **good memory**, mostly for information and odd details. I have perfect pitch and **good mathematical ability**."
- "I am a leader. I am **smart**."
- "I am **smart**. I like technology."
- "Easygoing, persistent, caring, **intelligent**, problem-solving, athletic, **willingness to learn**."
- "Good at history and geography, **can remember information easily**."

I am social.



- "I am **very social** and like to make people smile."
- "I am very **friendly**, **talkative**, and silly. I have great musical ability (11 years of piano). I am kind to others, smart, and much more!"
- "I am patient, wise, a **devoted family member** and a **great friend**. Also, I have moments when I can lead a group."
- "I am **kind and considerate** to others."
- "I love all of my friends, and I love to **keep in touch** with every friend I meet."
- "I am a dedicated worker, I **get along with my friends**."
- "I am empathetic, I am willing to challenge myself and others around me, I care about things bigger than myself, and **I am a good friend**."

Youth Perspectives about Themselves, Continued

I am creative.

"I'm **creative**. I've a good memory. I'm good with people. I'm a good friend. I'm very good at electronics and video games."

"I am **creative**. I make satisfying art. I am kind and empathetic."

"I am **creative**, funny, and caring."

"I am **all about music** and video games."

"I am **very artistic and musical**."

"[I am] **very artistic** and recognized by Smithsonian."



I work hard.

"I set my goals and I **strive myself to achieve** those goals."

"I am **hard working** and creative. The goal is for me and my colleagues to work efficiently."

"I am flexible and **open to challenge**."

"I have a **strong work ethic**, sense of humor, and am honest."

"I like sketching. I'm easygoing, kind, and a **hard worker**."

"I am generally optimistic, get along well with others, **hard-working**, and compassionate."

"I am a **hard worker**."

"I **put my mind** to anything I do."

