

CHAPTER 4

Task Analysis through Mini-Maps

For many years, I have been inspired to write a book after every successful change in student academic, social, and behavioral outcomes. Although highly motivated and full of specific examples and ideas, I kept from putting pen to paper because the task of writing an entire book seemed too daunting and overwhelming; just too far out of reach. If I were a student in a classroom, the teacher might say I was demonstrating work-avoidance behavior by doing things that I preferred to do instead of writing this book. We have all experienced work avoidance when faced with an overwhelming or stressful activity. From cleaning a dirty garage to washing dishes after a large party, we have all experienced that feeling of putting something off until we have the time, energy, and a plan to deal with the task efficiently. Once I created a map, or book outline, and broke it down into smaller steps, chapters, I started to feel as though it might be within my reach after all to write this book. I also made sure that I created a timeline that would allow for healthy breaks to ensure a quality product. The breaks also help to keep moving forward toward the end goal without giving up midstream.

APPLIED BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS (ABA)

ABA is a framework for systematically teaching positive instructional and behavioral outcomes rather than one specific strategy or approach. By looking at antecedents, behaviors, and consequences in an objective and factual manner, specific strategies can be applied for meaningful change. Modifying antecedents through the environment, scheduling, and visual supports may lead to the prevention of many behaviors. Task analysis is one of the teaching techniques included in ABA. Task analysis is a process by which a task is broken down into its essential or component parts. When brushing your teeth, think of all the smaller steps that you take in order to complete the entire task. Most people do this entire sequence of steps without having to think overtly about the process. However, there was a time in each person's life where each step was taught very clearly and specifically until the sequence was internalized. Some students with autism and other special needs benefit from a task analysis in order to complete tasks that seem unclear or overwhelming. Breaking a task down

into smaller chunks visually, incorporating interests and breaks incrementally work together to inform and motivate toward desired outcomes.

MINI-MAPS

In Chapter 3, you learned the importance of class and individual schedules. As you recall, the schedule organizes the big chunks of the day to promote understanding and predictability of upcoming activities. Consider this a major map of the day. Each one of these big chunks of the day may be clarified further by what we will refer to as mini-maps. A real-life example of this might be to take a trip to Disneyland. The United States or world map would be necessary to guide you to Disneyland. This is considered the major map required to travel across a large patch of land. Once you arrive at Disneyland, there is much to navigate in these grounds. As you enter the gate, you will receive a map of Disneyland with major rides and shows and eateries identified. The major map guided you to this destination, but it is the mini-map that helps you to have a positive experience once there. We will explore a variety of ways to provide mini-maps to ensure that students are fully prepared to navigate the experiences presented in the major map, or schedule.

How schedules and mini-maps connect

Now for a classroom example of a mini-map, let's look at the beginning of the day. The class schedule started out with a picture of a backpack to indicate that the students were to put their backpack away and get their materials ready. While most students understand that this one picture means to put their backpack away and get their folder out and put it in the pocket in the back of their chair, one student with ASD struggles with this first transition of the day. The teacher had to provide frequent verbal reminders and even physical assistance to help him complete the opening activity. A mini-map, or task analysis, was created to both support his understanding of the expectations and promote independence as seen in Figure 4.1. The mini-map has actual photographs of the steps of the sequence to clarify the process. This is how the mini-map extends from the larger map of the day, which is the schedule.

STARTING THE DAY AT SCHOOL

1. When I get to school, I will first open my backpack.



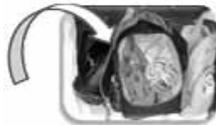
2. Then I will take my yellow folder out.



3. Next, I will put my yellow folder in my chair pocket.



4. The last thing to do is put my backpack on a hook.



That is how I start my day. Yeah!



Figure 4.1 Mini-map of the morning transition[**AQ**]

For another student, the end of the day routine was the most challenging. Therefore, as in Figure 4.2, a mini-map of the end of the day sequence was created to facilitate a smooth good-bye. As with many other strategies, the student's interest was incorporated to increase motivation and decrease stress.

TIME TO GO HOME

When school is over, then it is time to go home. The Three Little Pigs say good-bye to all their friends and line up to leave school.

"Good-bye."

"See you tomorrow."



The Three Little Pigs want you to try to:

1. Put your things away.
2. Get your lunch box.
3. Get your backpack.
4. Line up at the door.
5. Say "good-bye."



It is fun to go home!

Figure 4.2 Mini-map of the closing transition

For a student in high school who is learning work-based skills to transition to employment in the future, a mini-map is helpful to guide through a work scenario of cleaning at a bowling alley. In Figure 4.3, the steps of the work sequence have been outlined while incorporating the student's interest of basketball as the background. The original mini-map has pictures of the student performing the specific tasks himself. Notice that there is a water break in the middle of the sequence. Smaller breaks can be incorporated in the mini-map while a larger motivating experience may be identified at the end of the sequence.