



Danny Cayelli Is a 13-Year-Old Student With High-Functioning Autism. He Uses MindMeister for His Reading Comprehension Assignments at School.

"MindMeister has allowed my son to independently organize his reading comprehension assignments. It is so simple and practical, I can see him using it for all kinds of other subjects and tasks in the future."

Elsa Cayelli, Danny's mother

At a Glance...

- ★ Danny is able to study and prepare presentations all on his own
- ★ He saves time and enjoys doing his homework
- ★ His grades have improved from F to B

How He Does It

- ★ Creates a new map for every book
- ★ Updates / adds information after each chapter
- ★ Uses color codes and connections
- ★ Uses map to revise material and as a basis for presentation in class

Danny is a bright young boy who was diagnosed with what is known as high-functioning autism, a type of ASD that compromises his social skills as well as executive functioning. Danny has problems doing more than one thing at a time, he gets overwhelmed easily and has troubles answering complex questions. "The factual knowledge is there," his mom, Elsa Cayelli explains, "but it's like he's missing a filing structure in his head that would let him access the information efficiently."

Last year Danny's class started getting more complex reading assignments that required him to internalize what he was reading instead of just decoding the words. Each month, he had to read a book on his own and then do a report in front of the class. Even though Danny always chose the books himself and they were mostly below his level, he wasn't able to communicate what he had read or answer any questions about the material. His mother sat down with him and walked him through the plot, motives and characters, but still Danny had a hard time comprehending and expressing the books' content. "He got very frustrated and his grades dropped," Danny's mom says. "When we talked to his doctor about it, he suggested Danny do a summary of each chapter as soon as he had finished reading it. That did help, but since Danny was using text documents to do those summaries, he still wasn't able to organize his thoughts and notes the way he needed to. The big turnaround came when Danny's English teacher showed him how to use MindMeister."

Using MindMeister, Danny is able to create mental maps that represent his thoughts in an organized fashion. The visual structure triggers his memory and lets him access information more efficiently than ever before. He uses the tool regularly for his reading comprehension assignments. "I don't have to hassle him anymore with his reading," Danny's mom says. "He just sits down in front of his computer, creates a map and adds new information after every chapter he's read. At the end of the month he uses the map as a basis to prepare his book reports."

Danny's book maps usually feature a list of plot points, themes and motives, character descriptions as well as new vocabulary he has read. He makes good use of colors and adds additional connections when appropriate.

"I can see Danny using mind maps for all kinds of things other than reading comprehension," Danny's mom says. "I think they will be a great help when he starts taking science classes next year."

MindMeister enables Danny to work through his reading assignments and prepare his book reports all on his own. Since he started using the tool, his grades have gone up from an F to a B level and his reading comprehension has improved. But what's more, he finally enjoys doing his homework again.