

A Guide for Early Childhood Educators

March 2020

Dear Early Childhood Educators,

As we all work to respond to this unprecedented pandemic and its effects on our schools, we wanted to share a few resources to assist you in supporting your families.

All of the materials contained herein are yours to share with the families in your school. If you would like certain things modified to better meet your needs (i.e. no snowstorms in the south!), please reach out to us.

Depending on the demand, we will do our best to make small changes so that these materials can be most useful to you.

We understand that this is a continuously evolving situation. We have tried to put together materials that reflect best practices in helping children adapt to changes in routines, using age-appropriate language and information.

As we all navigate this uncharted territory, we hope these materials are helpful.

Thank you,

Meredith Polsky and Stephanie Slater

Meredith Polsky (Meredith@matankids.org) founded [Matan](#) in 2000 and serves as Matan's National Director of Institutes and Training, as well as the part-time Developmental Support Coordinator at [Temple Beth Ami Nursery School](#) in Rockville, MD and the Selective Mutism Specialist at [Growing Minds Child and Family Therapy Center](#). Meredith is a nationally sought-after speaker on Jewish Special Education. She holds a Master's degree in Special Education from Bank Street College, a Master's degree in Clinical Social Work from Columbia University and a graduate certificate in Early Intervention from Georgetown University. Meredith is a 2017 Covenant Award recipient, and co-author of the award-winning children's books [I Have a Question about Death](#), [I Have a Question about Divorce](#), and [I Have a Question about Cancer](#) (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively).

Stephanie Slater (Stephanie.Slater@adasisrael.org) has worked in the area of Early Childhood Special Education for 25+ years. She has a Master's Degree in Social Work and has done some post-graduate work in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy with Children and Adolescents. Stephanie completed a Graduate Certificate Program in Early Intervention at Georgetown University – School of Continuing Education in 2014. She has worked in the DC area community preschools for 15+ years and is currently the full time Director of Early Childhood Development & Family Support at [Gan Haya'el Nursery School at Adas Israel Congregation](#). For the past three years, Stephanie has worked with Matan's Early Childhood Institute as a presenter, Mentor and Mentor Coordinator. She is a certified children's yoga teacher and founded Paper Crane Yoga in 2012. She lives in Bethesda, Maryland with her husband and two daughters, ages 18 & 14. Stephanie is committed to advocating for a preschool environment where *all* children can develop and thrive.

Routines Rituals and Predictability

As we continue to grapple with a worrisome and frustrating time, our patience will undoubtedly be challenged. The joy of parenting can start to feel, well, joy-less. Setting yourself up in a way that limits stress and chaos could make a difficult period of time more manageable - and even enjoyable!

Children thrive on routines and predictability. As schools close and regular activities are postponed, days will be anything but typical for our young children. The more they feel a lack of control over their own time, the more they will behave in challenging ways.

Think about your own efficiency and productivity during a busy work week compared to a week when your office is closed. It often seems the more we have to do, the better we function.

Consider these three words as you prepare for the weeks ahead: Routine, Ritual, Predictability

Routine: Routines provide children with consistency, structure and organization. They give clear expectations and enable a child to process the beginning, middle, and end to each part of their day. Routines are not novel or unexpected. Children can feel confidence and ownership, knowing that they have already succeeded in mastering the routines of their day.

Rituals: Rituals ground children in their routines. They connect them emotionally to events. They give them comfort and provide a foundation that is known and predictable. Especially during times of uncertainty, rituals bring familiarity and calm.

Predictability: Predictability gives children a sense of control. Even when it is hard to maintain a consistent routine, providing them with the next few parts of their day can help them deal with the unknown. Verbiage like, “*First* we will have breakfast and *then* we will head to the store,” gives children the opportunity to start planning and processing. It helps them make the transition from one part of their day to the next. Providing children with the wording, along with a visual representation of that wording, allows them to truly grasp and conceptualize what’s to come.

In this packet, please find an example of what a *no-school* daytime schedule can look like. There is one for a younger child and one for an older child and also pictures that you can print, cut and arrange in an order that makes sense for your family.

Helpful Links:

[Webinar](#) on talking with children about coronavirus (pre-recorded)

[Webinar](#) on Tuesday, March 17th about family life with coronavirus (register to participate live)

[Article](#) on talking to children about Coronavirus (Tina Payne Bryson, PhD)

[Article](#) on talking to children about Coronavirus (Child Mind Institute)

A Social Story:

My School is Closed Today

My School is Closed Today



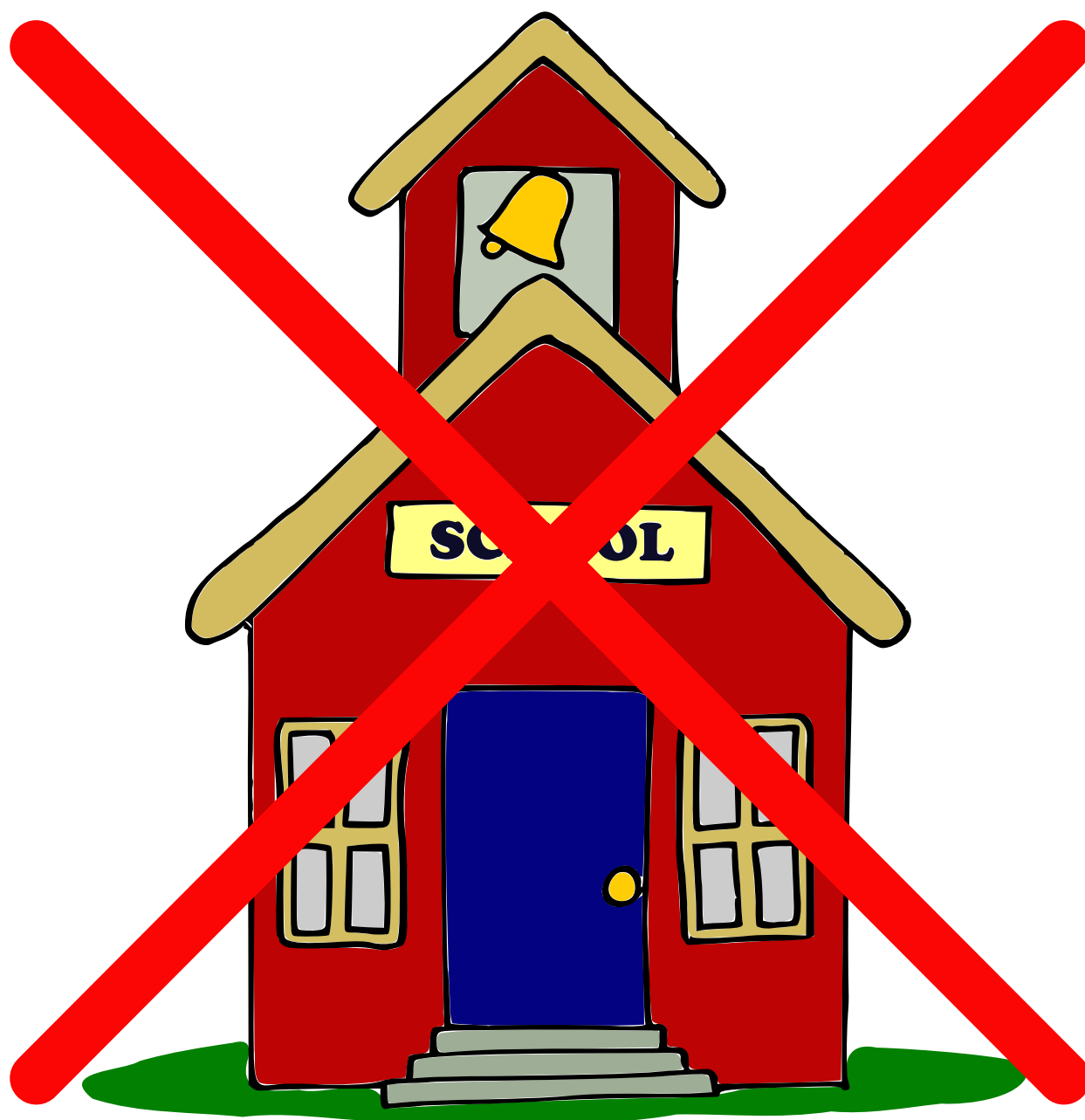
written by Meredith Polsky
Temple Beth Ami Nursery School
Rockville, Maryland



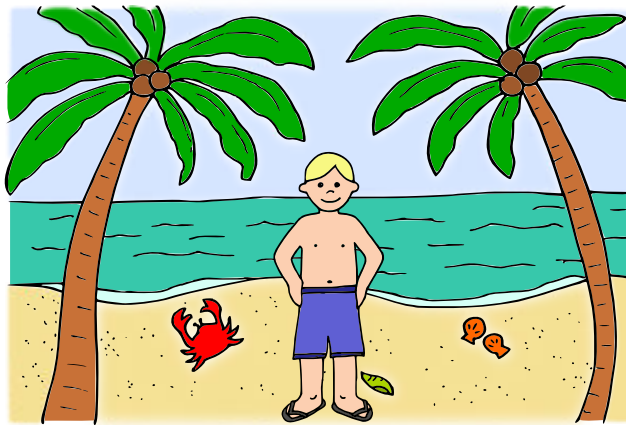
Every morning, I wake up, have
breakfast and start to get ready for
school.



I love school! I get to play with my friends and teachers, sing songs and have snack.



I want to go to school today, but it is closed!



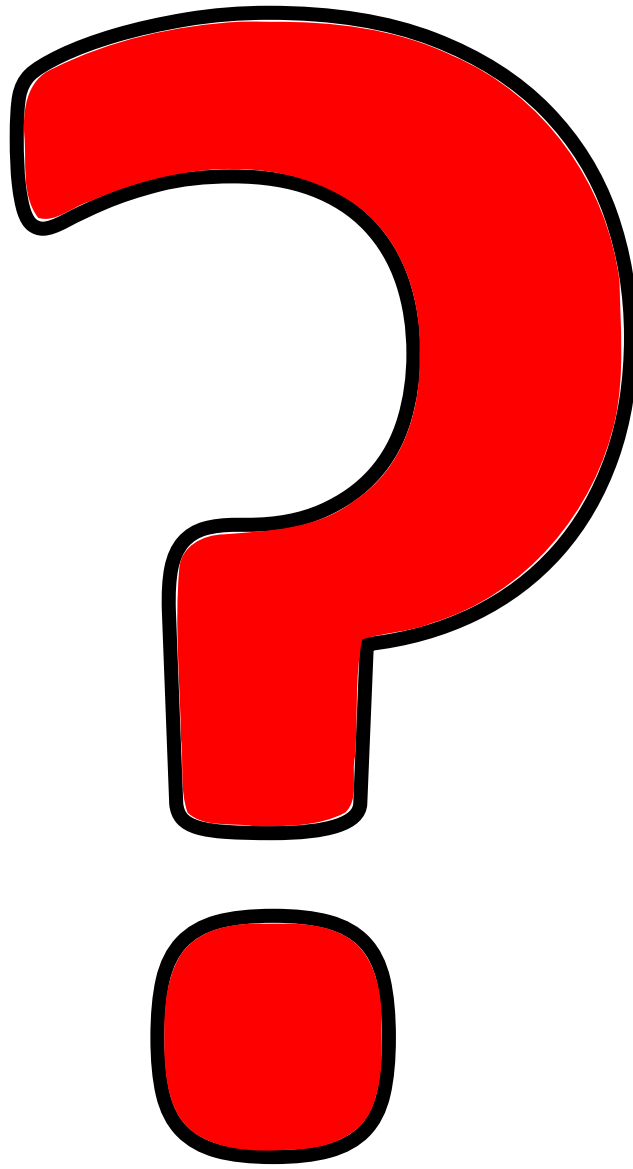
It's not snowing, and it's not time for
a vacation.



But my grown-ups say we need to
stay home.



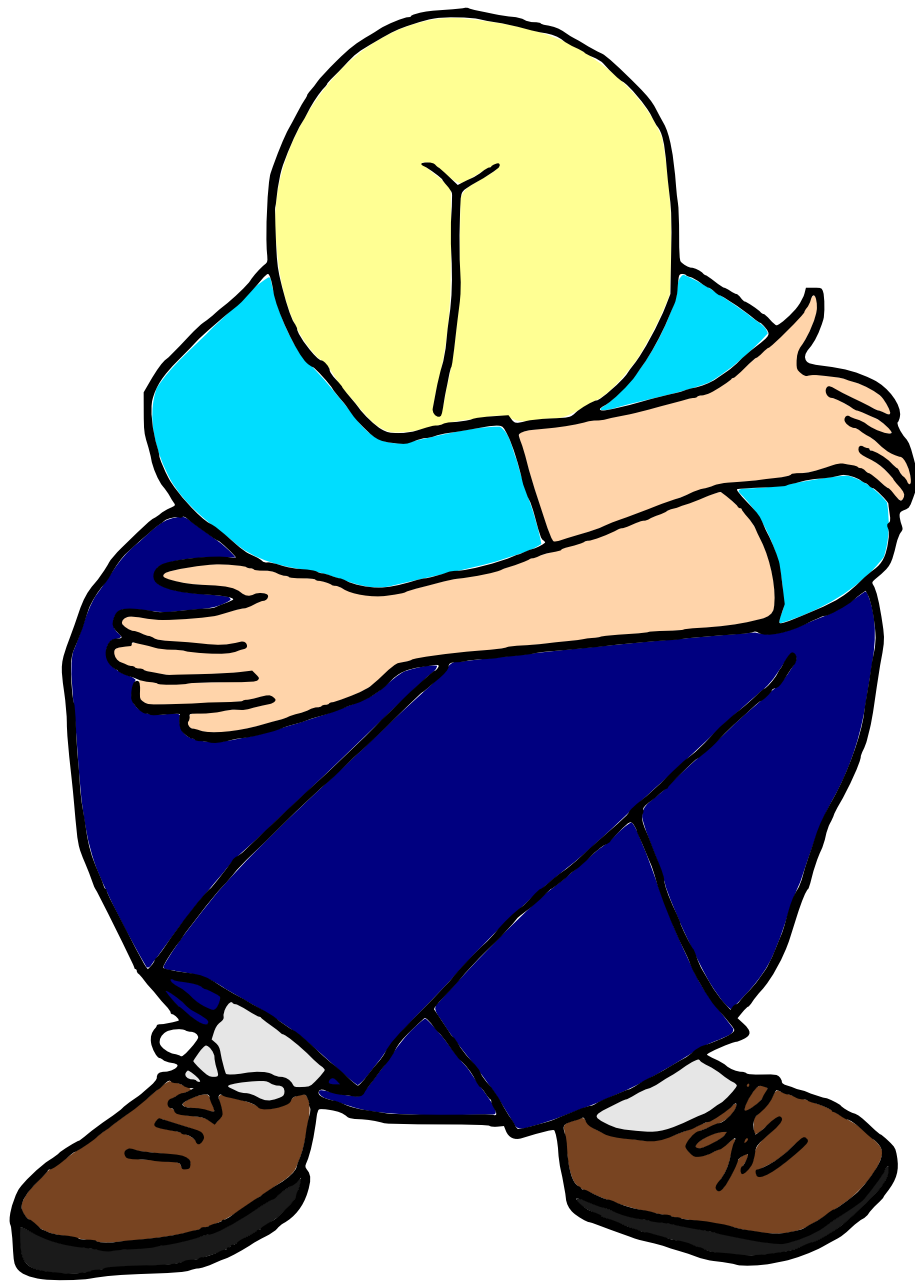
My teachers want to go to school
too! They like when I give them hugs,
and they hold my hand. They love
seeing me at school!



We all want to go to school, so why is
school closed?



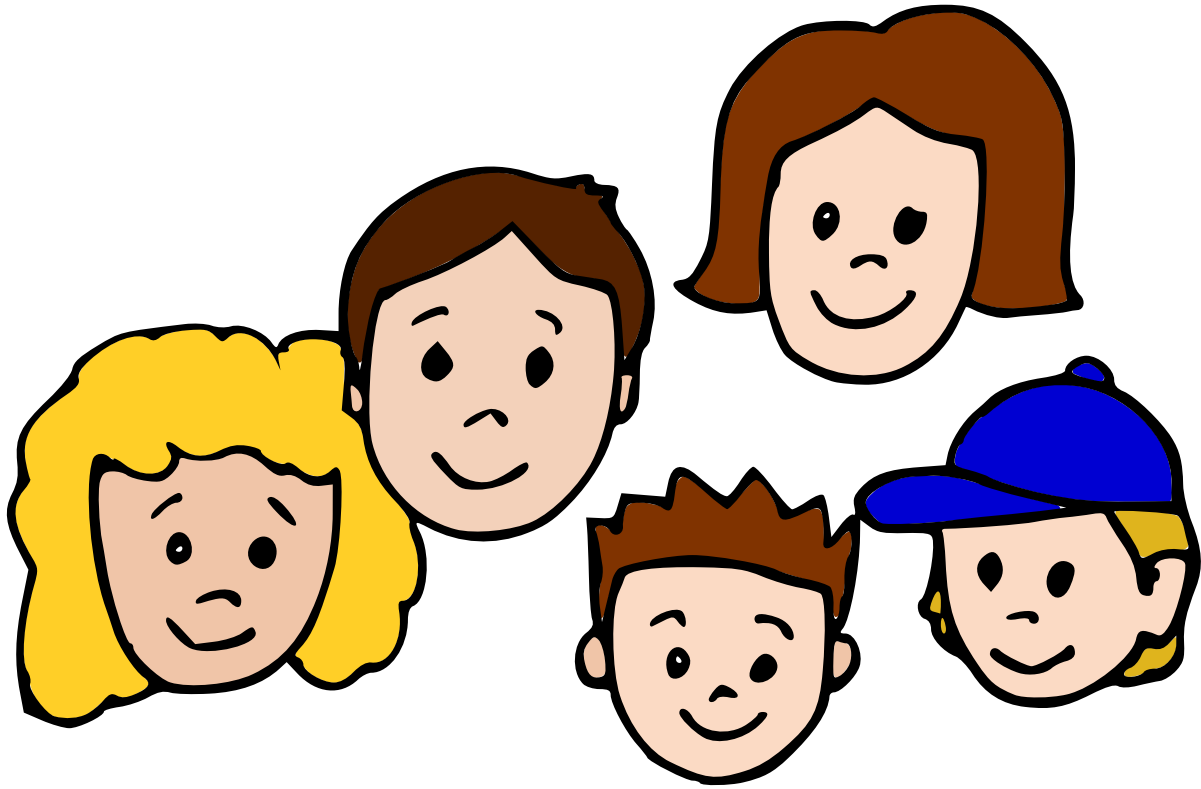
The grown-ups say we have to stay home because people are getting sick. But I'm not sick. And my teachers aren't sick, either!



One time last year I felt sick and I had to stay home from school for 2 days. All my friends got to play at school. I was so sad!



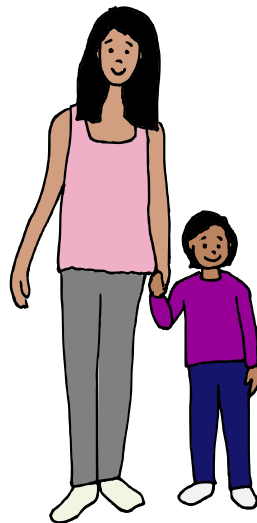
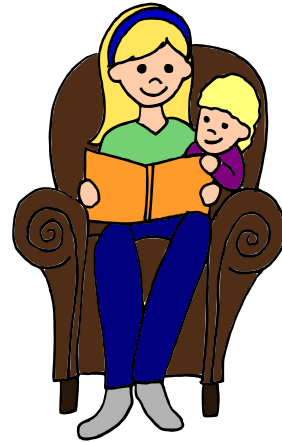
I'm not sick now. My friends are not sick. We are staying home to help people stay healthy.



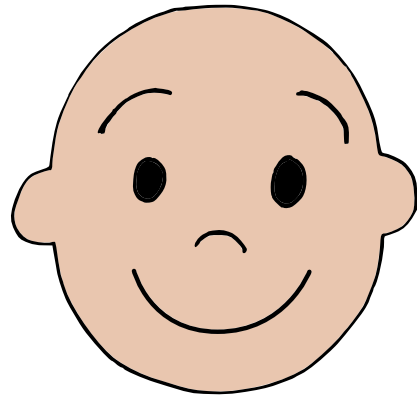
This doesn't usually happen. The grown-ups are being extra careful.



I wish I could go to school today, but
I will help us stay healthy and play at
home. I can sing the songs I sing at
school!



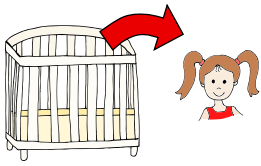
My grown-ups at home like when I give them hugs too. I can hold their hand and we can read books and have snacks together.



When school opens again, I will be so happy to see my teachers and friends. I will tell them about all the things I did when I was home!

Sample Visual Schedule: Toddlers

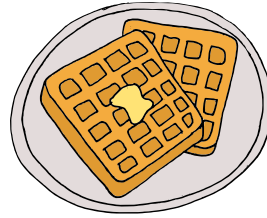
Daily Schedule



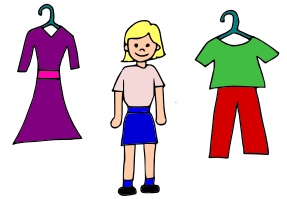
Out of crib



Diaper



Breakfast



Get dressed



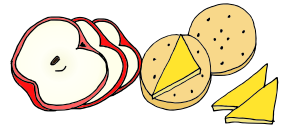
Play



Diaper



Go to Playground



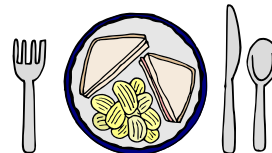
Snack



Diaper



Sensory Activity



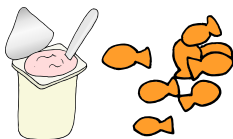
Lunch



Read Books



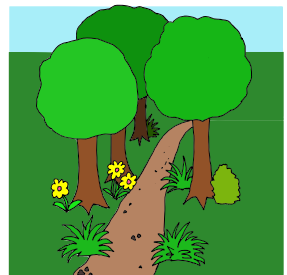
Rest



Snack



Diaper



Outdoor Fun



Craft Activity



Family Dinner



Bathe, Toilet and teeth



Sleep

Sample Visual Schedule: Preschoolers

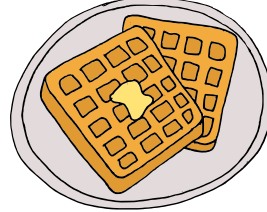
Daily Schedule



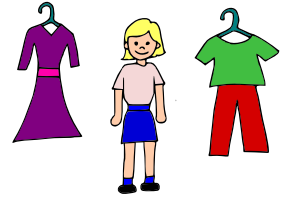
Wake up



Toilet and teeth



Breakfast



Get dressed



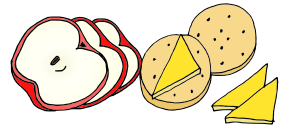
Play



Bathroom (toilet & hand wash)



Go to Playground



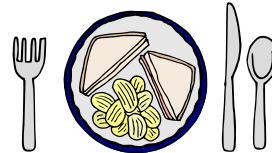
Snack



Sensory Activity



Bathroom



Lunch



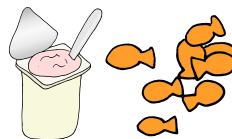
Read



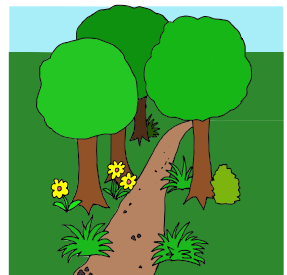
Rest/Nap



Bathroom



Snack



Outdoor Fun



Family Dinner



Craft Activity



Bathe, Toilet and teeth

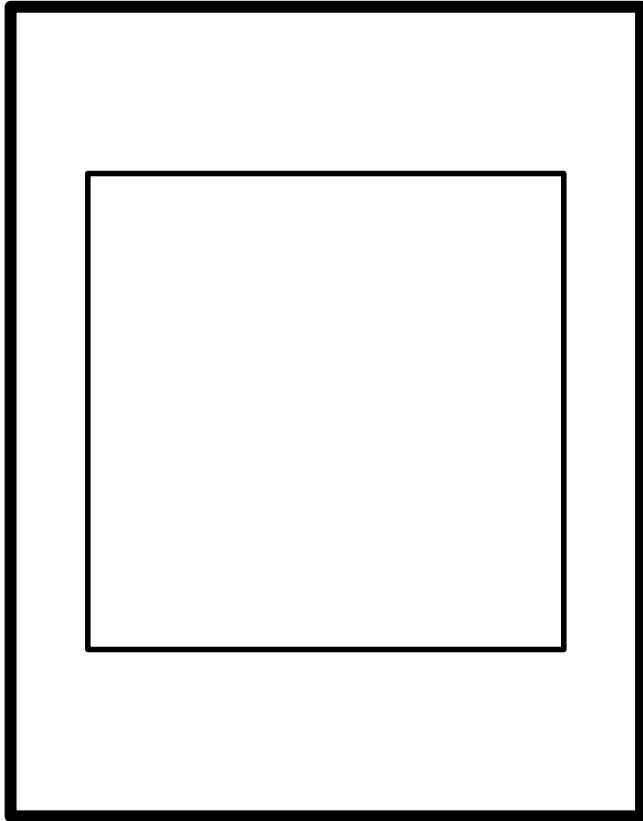


Sleep

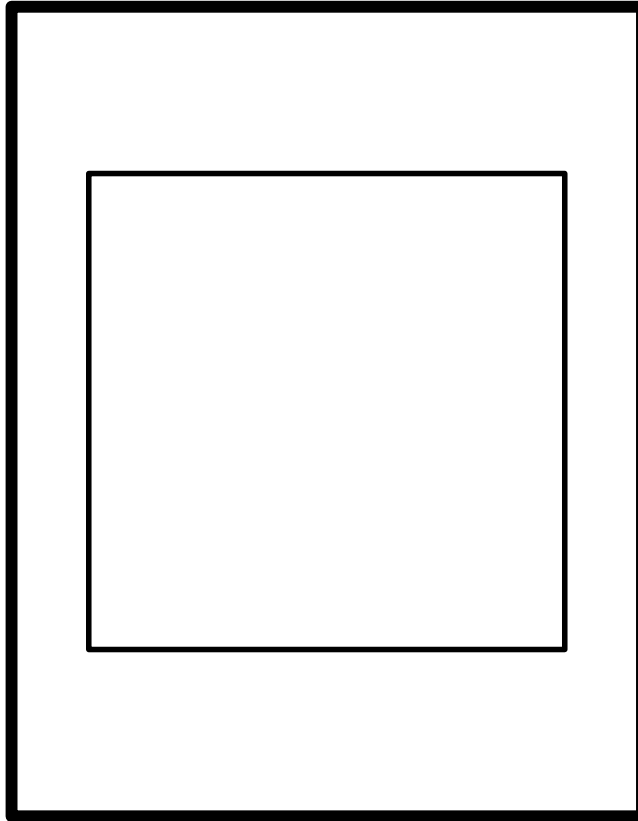
First, Then, Last Board

(pictures to cut out)

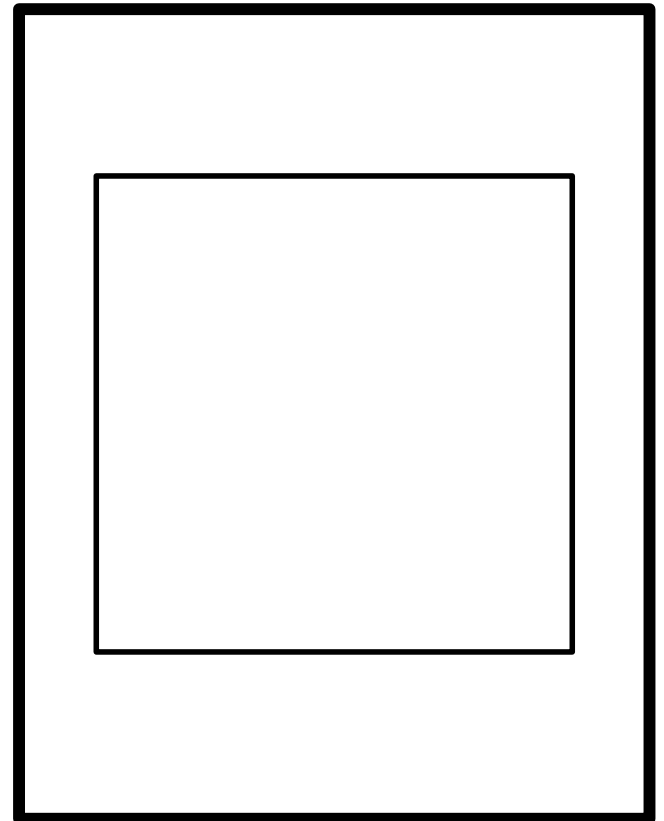
First



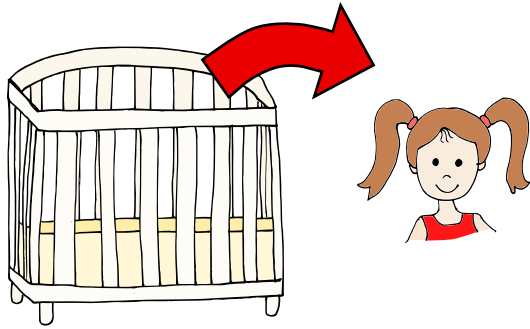
Then



Last



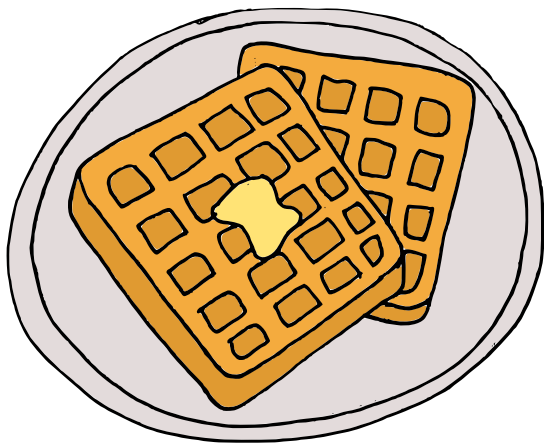
Schedule Pics



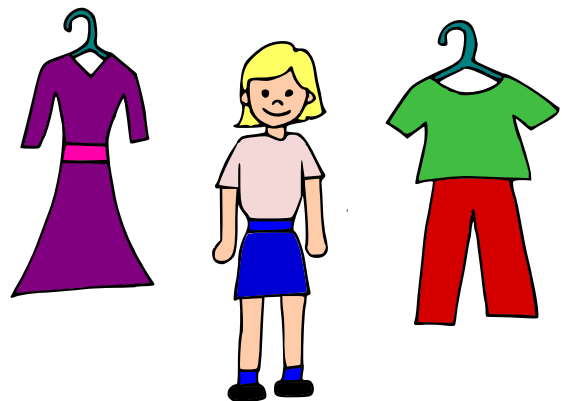
Out of crib



Diaper



Breakfast



Get dressed

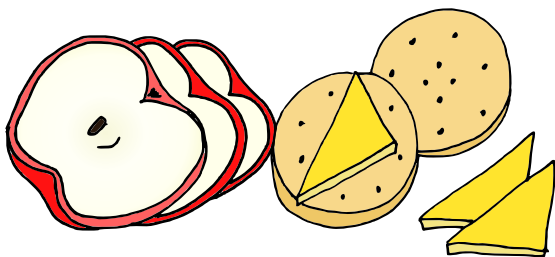
Schedule Pics



Play



Go to Playground

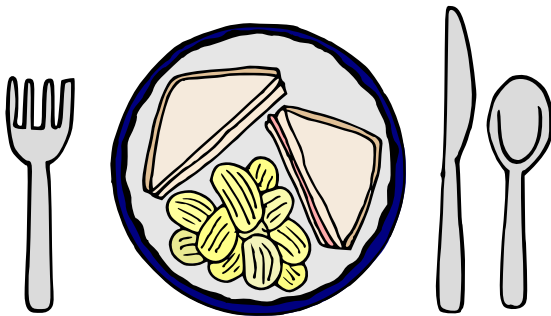


Snack

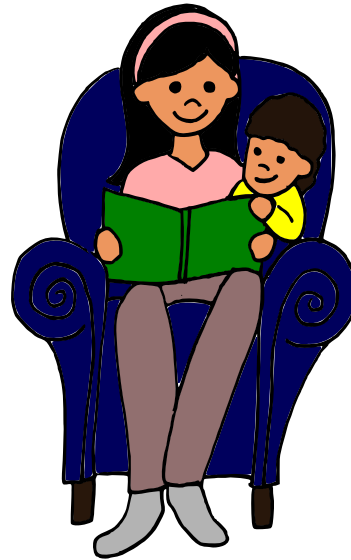


Sensory Activity

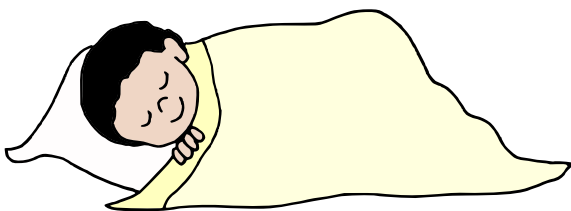
Schedule Pics



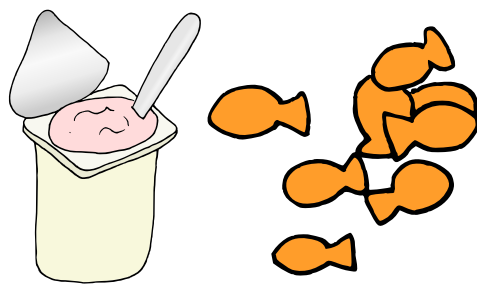
Lunch



Read Books

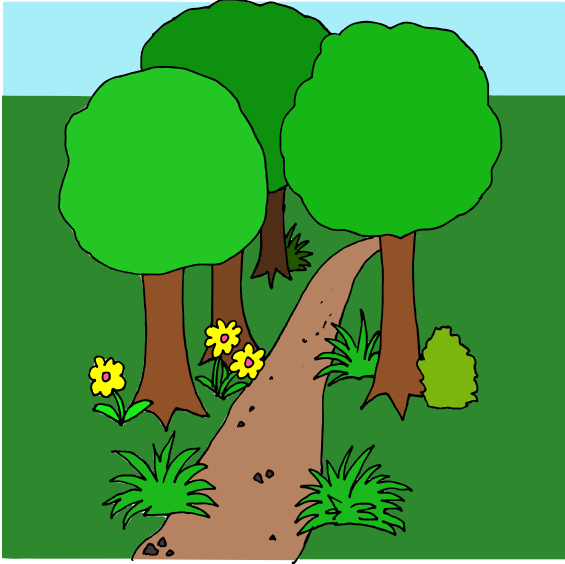


Rest



Snack

Schedule Pics



Outdoor Fun



Craft Activity



Family Dinner



Bathe, Toilet and teeth

Schedule Pics



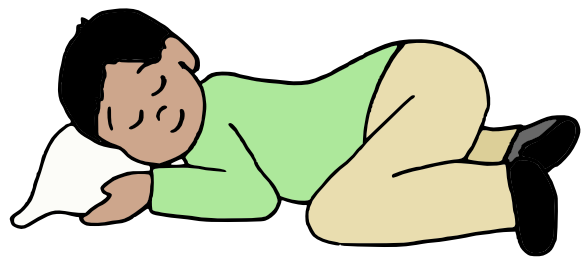
Sleep



Wake up



Toilet and teeth



Rest_Nap