9. Children need opportunities to develop self-control, self-regulation, and executive function.

1. **Advocate for Time and Space to Develop These Skills Before Academic Demands**
   - **Strategy:** Push back against early academic pressure and emphasize the importance of foundational self-regulation skills.
   - **Suggestions:** *Share developmental research that shows why executive function must come before formal instruction. Encourage school leaders to prioritize play, routines, and emotional support in early learning standards.

2. **Promote Play-Led, Brain-Building Activities**
   - **Strategy:** Support activities that naturally develop focus, memory, and flexibility through movement, music, and pretend play.
   - **Suggestions:** Provide examples of executive function games to families and staff. Advocate for schedules that protect time for unstructured child-led free play and guided reflection.

3. **Encourage Trauma-Informed, Emotionally Responsive Practices**
   - **Strategy:** Educate educators and caregivers about how emotional support fosters regulation and resilience.
   - **Suggestions:** *Offer training in co-regulation, calming strategies, and connection-based discipline. Highlight the long-term benefits of helping children feel emotionally safe.

4. **Support Predictable, Child-Centered Routines**
   - **Strategy:** Promote classroom environments that use consistent routines and visual supports to help children succeed.
   - **Suggestions:** Share best practices for routines and transitions with school leaders or caregivers. Encourage visual schedules and child-led transitions.

5. **Advocate for Professional Development Focused on Executive Function**
   - **Strategy:** Ensure educators understand how executive function develops and how to nurture it through everyday practice.
   - **Suggestions:** Suggest professional development focused on early brain development, behavior, and regulation. Emphasize practical strategies that educators can apply in their daily interactions with children.

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Defending the Early Years