

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

What We Believe

We believe that children need opportunities to develop self-control, self-regulation, and executive function, as these foundational skills support optimal whole-child development, healthy relationships, and long-term success. These abilities help children manage their emotions, make thoughtful choices, plan ahead, and adapt to challenges. Nurturing these skills early on allows children to thrive both in school and in life.

Why This is Important

Developing self-regulation and executive function in early childhood is essential because it lays the groundwork for future academic learning and social-emotional well-being. Skills like impulse control, focus, memory, and flexible thinking enable children to engage in group settings, follow routines, solve problems, and persist through frustration. When early environments prioritize emotional regulation and skill-building over rote instruction, children are better equipped to learn and grow.

✓ What it looks like when we get it right.	✗ What it feels like when we get it wrong.
Educators model calming strategies, validate emotions, and guide children through big feelings with empathy and consistency. Children feel safe, understood, and learn how to manage their emotions over time.	Adults expect children to "calm down" or "use their words" without support, or react punitively to emotional outbursts. Children may feel ashamed, confused, or unable to cope, which can lead to repeated outbursts or shutdowns.
Games like "Simon Says," pretend play, or building with blocks encourage focus, memory, and flexible thinking. Children develop cognitive control in fun, developmentally appropriate ways. They learn to plan, adjust, and persist.	Time for open-ended play is reduced or replaced with passive learning and strict routines. Children have fewer chances to practice thinking skills. They may struggle with impulse control or problem-solving.
Daily routines are consistent, with visual cues and clear transitions that help children anticipate what's next. Children feel more secure and independent. They learn how to manage time and transitions with growing confidence.	Schedules are chaotic, inconsistent, or overly rigid, leaving children unsure or overwhelmed. Children may act out or withdraw due to stress, confusion, or a lack of internal regulation tools.