

WARNING SIGNS THAT A PROGRAM IS OFF TRACK*

There are several warning signs that may alert you to the possibility that your program is “off track.”

- ⊖ **Warning Sign #1: Children are not purposefully involved.**
Children tend to wander around the classroom during the work/play time, unable to select an activity.
- ⊖ **Warning Sign #2: Children show little respect for materials.**
Children misuse many of the materials. Clean-up is a free-for-all with children throwing materials on the shelves or in cabinets.
- ⊖ **Warning Sign #3: Children fight over materials.**
Fighting over toys is a constant problem in each classroom. Teachers are continually arbitrating disputes.
- ⊖ **Warning Sign #4: Children are often in large groups.**
Circle time lasts 20 minutes in a three-year-old group. Everyone goes through routines at the same time, so waiting periods are unnecessarily long.
- ⊖ **Warning Sign #5: Children are not purposefully involved in activities outdoors.**
Children run around a lot outdoors, but there are few activities offered to involve them in more focused play. Fights and arguments among the children are frequent.
- ⊖ **Warning Sign #6: Teachers are continually testing children.**
The questions teachers ask children are designed to test them. (*What color is this? How many do I have?*) Teachers do not understand the difference between asking a question with one right answer (to test a child) and asking questions that encourage thinking.
- ⊖ **Warning Sign #7: Teachers have lost their spontaneity and joyfulness.**
Teachers follow old lesson plans and fail to pick up on the children’s interests.
- ⊖ **Warning Sign #8: Teachers are feeling defensive about the program.**
Teachers express concerns about getting children ready for elementary school and talk about pressures from parents to teach the children reading and math.

* From *A Guide for Supervisors and Trainers on Implementing the Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood*. Diane Trister Dodge Teaching Strategies, Inc., Washington, D.C.