

Visit With the Utays

November 2010

School Psychology and Education Specialists

Dr. Joe Utay, Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for Total Learning Centers and former professor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Department of Counseling, is a graduate of University of Pittsburgh, a school psychologist, marriage and family therapist, author, national speaker, and father.

Dr. Carol Utay is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. She is also a graduate of University of Pittsburgh and an expert in learning and special education. "Dr. Carol" has experience as a principal, Orton-Gillingham reading therapist, teacher, consultant, national speaker, professor, author, and mother. She is a recognized national Athena Award winner for community service.



All it Takes is One Small Stone

*"Dear Drs. Utay,
My daughter does her homework, studies, and, according to her teachers, is a very good student. However, this past week she brought her report card home in tears. She received two F's and until she brings her grades up the school won't let her run on the cross country team. She wants to do better in school and is trying as hard as she can, but I don't know how to help her. What should I do?"*

Being involved in your daughter's education is a great start. Most parents in your shoes will punish for the bad grades (wave a "stick") and/or create a reinforcement (offer a "carrot") to encourage motivation. But, if your child is doing all her work and paying attention in class, **maybe there is a deeper issue acting as a hidden barrier to academic success.**

We find that a lot of children can be overwhelmed with the information presented in school. With an average of 25 students to a class, it is hard for each child to receive needed attention. Talk with your daughter about how she spends class time, for example if she asks questions when she doesn't understand, if she takes notes, etc. These questions are a good starting point to **make sure you don't just need a simple solution** like a more organized notebook or study skills improvement.

As we have said repeatedly in our column over the past 10 years, be proactive at the first sign of a problem pattern rather than waiting to "see how it goes." After getting your daughter's teachers' input and confirming she is completing and turning in her work, we recommend calling in the experts. **A full diagnostic testing is an effective way to identify strengths and weaknesses in a child's ability to learn.**

A long run for cross country is a good analogy for her situation. She may have completed all the training, and have all the right equipment, but **if there is one small stone in her shoe, she won't perform to the best of her abilities.** A child-friendly nationally standardized full diagnostic evaluation, like the one offered locally at the Total Learning Centers, is able to gauge more than just her intelligence, reading, writing, and math. These tests are designed to get to the root of the problem. Whether it is attention, processing, transitioning, working memory, or even a "learning difference" like dyslexia, **diagnostic testing can identify issues keeping her from succeeding in school and offer specific ways to find and remove that stone!**

For more information about how to find and remove that stone in her shoe, call Total Learning Centers at (724) 940-1090. If easier, email us at success@TotalLearningCenter.com. Visit us at www.TotalLearningCenter.com and follow Dr. Carol Utay on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/carolutay>.

Recently honored by Parent Advocates for Learning Support for "**outstanding dedication, passion, and commitment in meeting the learning needs of all children.**"

Total Learning Centers was voted AGAIN Best Tutoring and Best SAT Prep by Nickelodeon's Parent Picks.

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