

Visit With the Utays

January 2011

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.



When Turning in Homework and Turning off TV is not Enough

Dear Drs. Utay,

We chose to move here BECAUSE school districts in this area have high academic expectations. What we didn't expect was for our son to have trouble keeping up. Beyond checking homework and limiting TV, one teacher suggested that if he begins to actually fail, testing would be useful to see if he might be eligible for special support, but I'm not sure. How do I know whether or not to get him tested?"

First, talk with your child about school. Be casual with a curious manner. **Kids become defensive at the first whiff of accusation.** Let him know you are trying to understand his school experience. Most kids will not readily admit they are struggling. So, here are common indicators that there may be a problem.

- Frustrated at school
- Says, "I'm stupid"
- Struggles with homework
- Says, "I hate school"
- Avoids school or homework
- Produces inconsistent work
- Poor or slow reading
- Inconsistent reading comprehension
- General underperforming
- Acts "lazy"
- Complaints from teachers
- Difficulty memorizing
- Works harder than grades show
- Difficulty with a particular subject
- Repeats the same mistakes
- Difficult getting OR staying organized

If you are thinking, "Many kids have these problems to some extent," you are right. Use this list as a starting point. Ask yourself, your son, his teachers, and maybe even parents of classmates if he is experiencing **more trouble than expected**

compared with similar peers. For example, are most kids in his class also struggling with staying organized? Is "difficulty memorizing" common among his intellectual peers? Next, normed, individually given, standardized testing will be your most efficient accurate way to find out 1) how your child compares to others, 2) what, if any, underlying learning problems are hidden barriers to his learning, and 3) what to do to remove barriers. **Choose a learning center that uses tests typically used by school psychologists so you can share results with your child's school.**

Many parents make sure homework is turned in and TV is turned off. But, these may be Band-Aids for a kid who needs antibiotics. If you want to know for sure what the underlying issue is keeping your son from succeeding academically, get him evaluated now. **Do not wait for failing grades.** Use the list above and a thorough evaluation to prevent failing in the first place and help your child prepare today for success tomorrow.

For more information on child-friendly evaluations or to discuss your child's specific needs, contact 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>.

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 two years running for Best Tutoring and Best SAT Prep by Nickelodeon's Parent Picks.

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