

Visit With The Utays July 2000

School Psychology and Education Specialists

Dr. Joe Utay, a graduate of Pitt, has been a counselor, psychologist, family therapist, author, national speaker, teacher, clinic director and father. He earned tenure as a professor training school counselors, marriage and family therapists, and school psychologists; and is now Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for Total Learning Centers.



Dr. Carol Utay, also a graduate of Pitt, has experience as a Principal, teacher, computer trainer, national speaker, adjunct professor, author, and mother. With a doctorate in education, she has trained thousands of teachers and parents to help children achieve success and feel good about themselves. She is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. Joe and Carol live and work in Wexford with their daughter Andrea.

“Learning to Read” to “Reading to Learn”

“My third grader has trouble reading but his teacher said not to worry since he isn’t failing. I know he’s capable of more. The teacher said there are no school programs he qualifies for to get help. What should I do?”

Have your son tested (alone) to compare his performance to others his age and grade. Reading tests should require reading aloud and silently. Reading comprehension, basic sight words, and phonics should be tested separately. Also, though the concern is reading, knowing his IQ is useful for comparison. It is expected that reading level is at least close to IQ.

If there is no big difference between reading level and IQ, the school will probably not have a program for your son (as his teacher told you). But that doesn’t mean he wouldn’t benefit from help from you.

First, read to and with your son. With easy books, the old, “You read a page then I’ll read a page,” can work wonders. Also, read harder books, more at his intellectual level, to him to expose him to higher level vocabulary and train his ears to hear the rhythm and nuances of written language.

Second, make sure he is gaining cultural literacy for his age. *Cultural Literacy* or *What Your 3rd Grader Needs to Know*, both by E. D. Hirsch, Jr. are good resources.

Third, watch videos of classic books. This will help him keep up with characters and plots of commonly known classics.

Fourth, if you already know these suggestions are not enough or after a few weeks of reading together you do not see improvement, have a professional assist with improvement. A private tutor or learning center will have curriculum to improve reading. Double check too on availability of help from school.

Don’t just wait and see what happens in the fall. We are offering free testing at Total Learning Centers or any other school psychologist can do the testing required to create a realistic success-oriented plan. Continue your proactive momentum to help your child prepare this summer for success this fall!

Please ask!

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