

# Visit With The Utays

## Begin the School Year Right

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## “Can’t Afford Tutoring” No Longer an Excuse

### 3 Ways to Free Help

*You guys are always suggesting getting professional help with school problems but we can't afford even the testing much less the actual tutoring. Even a little financial help might make it possible. Ideas?*

Good timing! We actually have three ideas. Two are available all the time and the third is only now available and only for a short time. The two perennial options are first, take advantage of the free testing and (if you qualify) special help offered in public schools, and second, for readers of our column, Total Learning Centers offers free evaluation of reading, writing, and math at no charge and with no obligation. Now on to the third, and temporary option, \$500 grants offered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

The Department of Education has agreed that they need to help students scoring below the average range (25<sup>th</sup> percentile) in reading or math. We have always been concerned about students scoring on standardized tests below the average range, but particularly those with scores low but “not low enough” for special help. This is the answer. The state has made available \$23.65 million dollars in an “Education Support Services” program.

\$500 per eligible student is available. This money will be given to parents (including step-parents and foster parents) to pay for after-school help. Applications are due back to the Department of Education as soon as possible! Even if you are not positive your child will qualify, you do not want to miss the cut off date.

Here are some key guidelines:

- 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders scoring below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on either the achievement tests (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders) or the state PSSA tests taken in 5<sup>th</sup> grade are eligible.

- 6<sup>th</sup> graders that scored below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile can use their 5<sup>th</sup> grade scores to receive a grant for services too.
- Instruction must be individual or in a small group.
- Reading and math are the focus areas.
- Students must be enrolled in school.
- Students will receive help at times other than regular school hours.
- Grant money may only be used for instruction, not materials or assessment.
- You may use test results from last year's testing only until the scores from the current year are available. As soon as they are available, you must then use those scores.
- Verification is needed by someone at the school (specifics to be announced).
- Return the completed application to the Department of Education for processing, approval, and finally the issuance of a grant certificate.
- Remember to make a copy of anything you send.
- Begin tutoring services at an approved location within 60 days of receiving the grant. Call Total Learning Centers for a list of approved locations.

*Let's take advantage of all opportunities to help our children. If you need help deciding if you are eligible, education experts at Total Learning Centers are available to help you free of charge. Call or bring in your child's test scores from last year. We will even help you fill out the application. We applaud the Pennsylvania Department of Education for doing their part to help our children prepare today for success tomorrow.*