

# Visit With The Utays

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*School Psychology and Education Specialists*

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**D**r. Joe Utay, graduate of University of Pittsburgh, is a school psychologist, marriage and family therapist, author, national speaker, teacher, clinic director, and father. He earned tenure as a professor training counselors and school psychologists and is Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for TLC and part-time professor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Carol Utay, graduate of University of Pittsburgh, is an expert in curriculum, learning, special education, and technology. She has experience as a principal, teacher, consultant, national speaker, professor, author, and mother. "Dr. Carol" is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. The Drs. Utay live and work in Wexford with their daughter Andrea.

## Too Soon to Schedule a Parent-Teacher Conference?

*"School has barely begun and already the work is beginning to get more difficult. Our son misses an assignment or puts off homework then doesn't do it and gets further behind. Should we wait until the first report card or is there something we should be doing now?"*

I (Joe) need to mow our yard. But, as the days and weeks roll by, the grass isn't waiting for me to get to it; it keeps getting taller. This always surprises me. I know logically why it grows, I just don't like mowing. I live in denial hoping the grass will stop growing or at least slow down until I can better fit it into my schedule. I know this problem will only get worse with time. I know the yard will look better and be less of a fire hazard and bug haven when mowed. The one thought that will help me overcome this avoidance of responsibility is that it will be easier to mow each time when I mow it more often. The point: be proactive. As sure as the grass will keep growing, your son will get further behind, unless you successfully deal with the cause. Use these questions to gather more information-your next step.

### Questions to Determine the Need for Help

- Has homework become increasingly more frustrating?
- Most nights, does homework take longer than the teacher originally said it typically should take?
- Is your child refusing your help yet unsuccessful on his own?
- Does he try to get out of going to school more and more?
- Are there more tears now than during the summer?
- In the morning is there a rush to find "accidentally" lost important school items or calls later from school?

- Does your child seem overly obsessed with video games, computer games or TV?
- Has your child made school friends? Do they eat lunch alone?
- If you have access to classmates, how does your child compare in terms of handwriting, grades, attitude, etcetera?
- Does your child complain about not understanding or forgetting directions?
- Does your child often say school is boring (code word for either too easy or too hard)? Does your child refuse to read even high-interest material?

If still concerned, set up a conference with the teacher to discuss expectations. If the teacher says, "Don't worry. It's still early in the year," ask what signs to watch for that would signal there's a problem. What would cause the teacher to say, "Oh, in that case we need to take action as soon as possible so the problem doesn't worsen."? This is not a time to be simply pleasant and vague. Encouragement and hope are wonderful, but meanwhile the grass is getting out of control. Catching problems before they really take root is one more way to help your child prepare today for success tomorrow.

**Please ask!** For more information and great websites to help with education challenges, visit the Total Learning Center website: [www.TotalLearningCenter.com](http://www.TotalLearningCenter.com) or call (724) 940-1090 for a free copy of a TLC CD full of useful information for parents.

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