

Visit With the Utays

August 2007

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, 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 national 2006 Athena Award winner for community service. They live and work in the North Hills with their daughter Andrea.

“Sprint” this Summer for Success this Fall

“My son Tom has a good memory, can pay attention most of the time, and at least when studying at home, seems to know the material taught. Before the summer is over or as soon as possible, I'd like him to get faster at showing his teachers what I know he knows. If given unlimited time to respond to teachers (and friends too), this would not be a problem. Unfortunately, time limits are a constant part of both academic and social life. Suggestions?” -Another Concerned Parent

Insightful question! Tom needs more than excellent attention, knowledge, and memory. As you indicated, Tom must attend, learn, remember, and QUICKLY RESPOND to maximize success and happiness in and out of school. Increasing Tom's speed in processing – thinking and reacting faster in school, social, and family situations – is possible but to accomplish this as quickly as you want will need special focus.

Through a series of carefully designed exercises, child-friendly “coaches” can help students increase their processing speed in a variety of vital areas one small successful step at a time. The program we developed at Total Learning Centers for this is aptly named, Sprint. For example, processing speed is important when Tom needs to both read a lot of material and quickly understand and remember what was just read. The same is true with math, especially with multiple steps, so both reading comprehension speed and working math problems quickly are covered in every session of Sprint.

Sprint also focuses on other areas where increasing how fast Tom thinks and responds also increases success and confidence. Tom will need to keep up with the teacher when taking notes. After school, homework must be done in a timely manner for *everyone's* sanity! Peers expect

socially appropriate reaction speeds when telling jokes, using figures-of-speech and the “in” language of the group. Teachers, parents and other authority figures expect a quick response to questions and directions. Imagine getting into trouble or at least not living up to your and others' expectations in school or with peers, not because you don't know something or can't do something, but because you're too slow with it. Therefore, all these areas and more are covered in every session of Sprint.

You can create exercises yourself to help Tom speed up his response time. But, since you want to see results quickly, we suggest a more structured coach/tutor-directed approach. Whether attacking this issue yourself or with professional help, improving Tom's ability to quickly think then convey his good thoughts to others will definitely help him prepare today for success tomorrow.

For more information about this or any other topic related to your child's success, including professional assessment of strengths and needs, or a free TLC report: How to Make the Best Use of Your Child's Summer, contact Total Learning Centers at 724-940-1090 (Wexford, Fox Chapel, and Murrysville areas).

Reprinted from Northern Connections August 2007.