

Visit With the Utays

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School Psychology and Education Specialists



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"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.

Early Signs of Later Reading Problems *When in Doubt, Find Out*

"I notice many readers ask you for solutions to already known problems. My young children don't have reading problems (one is only 4 and the other is a first grader, so our expectations are not high for now). My question is what should we be looking out for – warning signs – for reading problems later so we can PREVENT, or at least minimize, them especially since reading problems run in the family?"

We hereby officially give you permission to have high expectations, even though, or rather because, your children are 4 and in first grade. You are wise however to be watching for early warning signs of later reading problems since it does seem so often to "be genetic." Though even modern geneticists do not have it fully figured out how reading problems may be passed from one generation to another, we school psychologists and educators definitely know what to do to build a solid early reading foundation for any child. However, we rely on aware parents like you to let us know your suspicions of potential problems.

Having any of the following does not automatically mean a future reading problem. However, these are red flags (if out-of-ordinary compared with peers) and signal the need to take action to strengthen basic skills (even for young children such as yours).

Red Flags for Later Reading Problems for Children Under Age 5

- Late talking
- Pronunciation problems
- Slow vocabulary growth or not able to find the right word
- Difficulty rhyming
- Trouble learning numbers, letters, days of the week
- Very restless and easily distracted
- Trouble interacting with peers
- Poor ability to follow directions or typical routines

Red Flags for Later Reading Problems for Children in Kindergarten and 1st Grade

- Slow to learn letters-sounds connections
- Confuses basic words (talk, ride, cook)
- Makes consistent reading and spelling errors, letter reversals (b/d), inversions (m/w), transpositions (felt/left), or substitutions (house/home)

- Transposes number sequences and confuses signs (+, -, x, /, =). Slow recall of math facts
- Slow to learn new skills, relies heavily on memorization
- Impulsive, lacks planning
- Awkward pencil grip
- Trouble learning to tell time or tie shoes
- Poor coordination, unaware of physical surroundings, prone to accidents

In other words, any time your children do not learn to listen, speak, move, or read as expected, do not wait to increase your expectations later. Take these warning signs as seriously as you do your "check engine" light on your dash. At this time research tells us we can teach 95% of children effectively to read at least at their grade level regardless of possible learning problems, attention weaknesses, dyslexia, language learning disabilities, etc. The key is to get the right help before they fall too far behind. Listen and watch for early warning signs to help your children 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).

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