

Visit With the Utays

May 2008

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.



Drs. Joe and Carol Utay are charter members of Allegheny North Kiwanis, a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world, one child, one community at a time. They are proud parents of Andrea, who graduated college after struggling successfully with support from the educational community and experts at Total Learning Centers.

Give Your Child a Reading Boost this Summer

"I know my child is intelligent enough to read and keep up with his many assignments involving reading, but it's a chore which makes it a chore for ME. It just doesn't come as easy to him as other things like math or science. If you don't think I'm overreacting, what do you suggest he can do this summer to help build up his reading skills?"

No, you are definitely not overacting. More than any other academic skill, parents are concerned most about their children's ability to read, and rightfully so. **Reading is the gateway to a student's future.** There are nonreaders who become successful and even famous. But, these are by far the exceptions to the rule. Students with reading problems are much less likely to graduate high school, attend and graduate college, get and keep the job they want, or make the income they know they are capable of earning. They can't pass the driver's exam, read menus and instructions as easily as their friends, and often end up hanging out with what most parents would consider the "wrong crowd." Of course, there are more variables involved in each of these than just reading, but **the ability to read is a powerful determinant to decisions made by and for our children far past the time they are expected to master the basics of reading.**

School is often challenging and sometimes even frustrating. That is not only expected but can potentially contribute to learning positive life skills such as planning ahead, handling unavoidable stress, and using available resources to achieve difficult goals. However, high level frustration that you and your child come to expect on an ongoing basis (especially with minimal success) is unacceptable. Since reading assignments

have become, as you put it, a chore for both of you, you are right to **devote at least a portion of this summer to make a difference for next year.**

In spite of education's bad press nationally, we are fortunate to be living in communities with really fantastic public and private schools. They really do a great job educating our children. Sometimes though children need an extra boost, an extra chance to get on the right track, and many parents choose the summer to work on closing the gap between their child's potential and current frustrations. **You want your child to prepare this summer to best take advantage of learning opportunities in school this fall.**

From our experience, the most effective way to accomplish this goal is to use a learning center with experienced experts who use research-based approaches to teaching reading. Ask people you trust who they have taken their children to for reading help. The most important question to ask is, "Did your child's reading actually improve?" You want concrete evidence of success. **Giving your child that boost in reading skills will make next year an entirely different school experience for BOTH of you.**

For more information about Total Learning Center's kid-friendly evaluation process, or to discuss your child's specific needs, contact an Education Expert at 724.940.1090 or info@totallearningcenters.com or visit them at TotalLearningCenters.com or one of their 4 locations in Wexford, Fox Chapel, Murrysville, and South Hills.

Reprinted from Northern Connections May 2008.