

Visit With the Utays

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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 and 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 Athena Award winner for community service.

Grade Already Slipping?

To worry or not to worry – that is the question, and here is the answer.

"Dear Drs. Utay: Everyone in the family felt the typical nervous excitement that often accompanies the beginning of the school year. Supplies were purchased, study spaces cleared, and extracurricular activities capped at two. Unfortunately, our guarded optimism was short lived. Already we have seen slipping grades along with slipping work effort. Actually, slipping is too mild; it's more like the beginning of a landslide. Our son is convinced, 'It's not a problem,' and he may be right, for now. Should we trust him and let him take responsibility for turning things around? Or, should we take charge and, while risking offending his sense of independence, possibly prevent a catastrophe?" Tom and Linda R.

Dear Tom and Linda,

You cannot stop a landslide. Once the snow, rocks, trees, and debris pick up momentum, all you can do is pray and start planning the rescue mission. In spite of your attempts to prevent problems early on, you are seeing signs of a potential landslide. Up to a point, school-related challenges and frustrations are inevitable characteristics of the natural terrain of school. Instead of preventing minor frustrations, your job is to prevent the landslide that will definitely occur when problems are not solved as they appear and therefore allowed to snowball out of control.

The following is a partial list of red flags indicating the need for looking more in depth into possible underlying learning problems:

- Stomach aches in the morning
- Trouble sleeping
- Uneven or slipping grades
- Reading, writing, math skills that are not as strong as expected
- Memory is uneven
- Consistent difficulty with class work

- Homework taking longer than expected
- Overly distracted during homework
- More than the usual complaining about school

Your son is trying hard to climb the steep mountain that is his education. His red flags, including slipping grades, are making considerable vibrations on the increasingly snow-filled mountain side. The good news is you are catching it in time. If your son's situation worsens, there are many incredible resources available for his "rescue." However, now is a great time to prevent that need. Our recommendation is to start with testing so you can pinpoint exactly where he needs help, then provide it. Doing what you can to minimize frustration and prevent landslides, is one more way to help your child prepare today for success tomorrow.

For information about testing to help pinpoint strengths and needs as well as research-based programs to stop the landslide, contact your nearby Total Learning Center at 724-940-1090, email success@totallearningcenters.com, or check the website at www.TotalLearningCenters.com. Total Learning Centers was voted Best Tutoring and Best College Prep by Nickelodeon's Parent Picks.

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