

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.

Your Child's Grades *Reacting to the Crash*

Dear Drs. Utay,

Like the Stock Market, our child's grades plummeted. But unlike the Stock Market, we don't want to just wait as grades hopefully come back up. We did what you suggested and proactively got him organized, made sure he had enough sleep, watched his nutrition, and offered support. Grades are definitely not what we expected. Now what?

Trying Our Best in North Hills

Dear ***Trying Our Best in North Hills***,

The purpose of being proactive is not to prevent challenges, but rather strengthen your child so he can successfully deal with and learn from those inevitable challenges. So, congratulations for being proactive. Now take the same hand used to pat yourself on the back and grab your car keys- you are going to visit the teacher!

1. Immediately talk with your child. In a collaborative not accusatory way, find out as much as you can why grades were not as expected. Gather information like a reporter: "Everyone else in the class failed the last two quizzes you say? Ok, tell me about homework..." Most likely he too is disappointed and not sure what happened. Regardless how much he blames others or situations, he may think, "Obviously I'm stupid or broken." So, convey this is about solving a problem, that is all.
2. Make an appointment with the teacher(s) to meet as soon as possible. Share your concerns with the same collaborative attitude you brought to the table with your child.

If this is the first time you have seen a lower-than-expected grade, often the above discussions will be enough to turn things

around quickly. If this is an emerging pattern however, specialized methods of getting to the root of the problem are needed so professional testing is recommended. Rather than, "Oh no, not professional testing! Is something THAT wrong with my child?" try, "I prefer there not be a need, but I am grateful that we have in our community child-friendly experts to help me figure out what really is going on and what to do about it."

Often the school is a good source for testing if they can do it within two weeks. Otherwise, check other community resources. If your child is in the 7th grade or above, start tutoring even while waiting for testing since each day pushes him further behind his class. If testing shows the problem is curriculum content like not mastering a particularly difficult math concept, basic tutoring should be sufficient. If testing shows a problem with underlying foundation skills like phonics, working memory, sustained attention, or mental processing, you are also in luck. There are research-based proven approaches to develop those as well. They just require commitment that is more involved. Unlike your lack of control over the Stock Market, doing your homework, then including in your team whoever is needed to bring grades up is one more way you help your child prepare today for success tomorrow.

For information about testing to help pinpoint strengths and needs as well as research-based programs, 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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