

# Visit With the Utays

August 2009

*School Psychology and Education Specialists*



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**D**r. 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.

## Prepare for School Success Give Your Child Resources and Skills

To help fellow parents best prepare their children for a successful start to this school year, we asked an experienced mother to share what she did that made a significant difference.

Dr. Carol: Sarah, I know that before last year your son David had major problems completing school work.

Sarah: It was a horrible cycle of frustration, defiance, and tears. He wasn't a trouble maker at all; he just drove himself and everyone else in the family crazy!

Dr. C: What was frustrating him?

Sarah: The dreaded homework monster. Actually, that's only partly true. Homework itself wasn't to blame as much as his inability to handle the work.

Dr. C: His peers did it and turned it in, and got at least adequate grades, but David didn't?

Sarah: Not "didn't" but "couldn't." He either pretended he didn't have it, or whined every three seconds that he didn't understand what to do. Either strategy made things worse, his exasperation grew, and he fell further behind.

Dr. C: So what did you do to turn things around?

Sarah: First, I prepared him physically and emotionally for the new school year. This included getting back into good nutrition and sleep habits as well as, together, setting up a comfortable, well-stocked study area.

Dr. C: And you did this well before the school year started?

Sarah: Like most parents, we'd wait until the very last moment to force our poor innocent children to wave a sad goodbye to their precious summer freedom. Instead, this time we started a brief ritual in which we did say goodbye to one season of fun and learning, with its pros (swimming) and cons (sunburn)

AND hello to the next season of fun and learning, with its own pros (afterschool activities, lunch, a favorite teacher) and cons (the "H" word). And yes, well in advance of the first day of school.

Dr. C: Was that enough?

Sarah: Oh no and that's where TLC really helped. What we found out through a really thorough child-friendly evaluation was that David wasn't complaining to get out of work or to get attention or purposely disrupt our family's peace. There were fundamental problems that needed to be worked on so he could then actually apply his intelligence and do the assigned work. We learned that David was missing underlying skills that he needed in order to then learn basics, and beyond.

Dr. C: So, you recommend internal changes, like nutrition and sleep and attitude, as well as external changes like a good study area and help to uncover and improve weak underlying skills.

Sarah: Absolutely. Those changes made a huge difference not only in the fall but the entire school year. No perfection of course - that's not expected or even wanted - but definitely a much happier less stressful year, for everyone.

For information on how you can help best prepare for a better school year this fall, call Total Learning Centers at (724) 940-1090 to discuss your own child's specific situation and needs. If easier, email us at [success@TotalLearningCenter.com](mailto:success@TotalLearningCenter.com). Follow Dr. Carol Utay on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/carolutay>.

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*Reprinted from Northern Connections August 2009.*