

# Visit With the Utays

January 2010

*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.

## Report Cards Offer Useful Weather Report

**"Dear Drs. Utay:** Winter is here and with it, winter weather - the beautiful along with the not-so-welcome. Living in the Pittsburgh area we might not always welcome snow fall, but we do expect it. However, **we did not expect our child's grades to fall.** We're new to this and don't want to make a bigger deal out of it than needed. On the other hand, we don't want flurries to develop into an ice storm."

We love to hear from proactive parents! **You are smart not to just "wait and see" and there is much you can do to help.**

There are three levels of action you can take depending on your child's needs: basic home interventions, basic tutoring, or a professional program aimed at developing whatever underlying foundation problems need work. Home interventions are what you can do at home with minimal (if any) help from outside experts. This includes helping your child get enough 1) sleep, 2) nutrition, 3) exercise, 4) organized, and 5) your support with homework and projects. If these are already in place with no improvement in grades, it's time to consider the next level, working with a tutor.

Often the above home-centered tips along with an honest discussion with your child and the teacher will result in strategies to rather quickly turn things around. If this is an **emerging pattern** however, deeper and more intensive methods of getting to the root of the problem are needed and **professional child-friendly testing is recommended.**

Often the school is a good source for testing if they can do it within the next week or so. Also, check with Total Learning Centers for testing availability. If your child is in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade or above, **start tutoring even while waiting for testing since each day pushes him or her further behind.** Plan on intensive work for at least two weeks, then drop to twice a week, then once a week, depending on progress. 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're also in luck. **There are research-based proven approaches to alleviate those challenges.** They just require more involved commitment than basic tutoring. Unlike your lack of control over the weather, 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 useful information about your child's **specific** strengths and needs as well as **practical recommendations**, call Total Learning Centers at (724) 940-1090. If easier, email us at [success@TotalLearningCenter.com](mailto:success@TotalLearningCenter.com). Visit us at [www.TotalLearningCenter.com](http://www.TotalLearningCenter.com) and follow Dr. Carol Utay on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/carolutay>.

**Total Learning Centers was voted AGAIN Best Tutoring and Best SAT Prep by Nickelodeon's Parent Picks.**

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