



Closer Look

AN ADVERTISER PROFILE

Diane Caruso, Director at Land O' Lakes KnowledgePoints, tutors a child with different learning styles.

KnowledgePoints Director specializes in students who learn differently



Diane Caruso excels at teaching children who learn differently. Before becoming director at Land O' Lakes KnowledgePoints, she taught students with learning disabilities, dyslexia, and attention deficit disorder for 14 years at Tampa Day School, one of the area's best schools for kids who struggle in traditional schools.

About 20% of students learn differently than their peers, Caruso explains, and are more successful in school if taught using methods that cater to their learning style. Caruso has integrated these methods into the curriculum at KnowledgePoints since joining the tutoring center a year ago.

"Many children come to us, especially those in middle school, who say they are failures," said Caruso. "I tell them they did not fail, we did. If a child is not learning, it is our fault. Every student can learn if taught according to how they learn best."

Caruso said that many students who learn differently get behind in school not because of lack of intelligence or motivation, but because a traditional classroom is designed to focus on the 80% of students who learn using traditional methods.

"Teachers do not always have the time necessary, and often may not have been exposed to the methods, to reach students who learn differently," said Caruso.

Caruso assesses every new student and customizes a tutoring program that uses teaching methods that support a student's learning profile.

"Children do not learn sequentially – it's more like an elevator that starts and stops," said Caruso. "We design programs that target a student's weakness and scaffold the skills to create a more solid understanding of a particular concept."

Within 40 hours of tutoring at KnowledgePoints, most students leap ahead more than one full year in grade level equivalency. "We teach strategies to make the child accountable and independent so that he can go back to his classroom and absorb the material he's given by the teacher in a way that he can process it."

Land O' Lakes KnowledgePoints is owned by Rocky Contreras, who opened the center three years ago with his wife Monica, a teacher at McKitrick Elementary in Lutz.

"Diane Caruso is one of the most knowledgeable and effective educators I have ever worked with," said Contreras. "While we continue to help plenty of 'traditional learners,' Diane has enabled us to augment our materials to also reach those kids who learn differently with amazing results."

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