

# **Employee's Own Investigation/Response**

Christopher Falzone

Case No. 12-13-236

School Year: 2012-2013

To Whom It May Concern;

This letter is in response to the allegations set again me, Christopher Falzone, when I was a Substitute Teacher at Sheridan Hills Elementary School during the 2012/13 school year.

I have been working at Sheridan Hills Elementary School for the past 9 years. First as the after school Director, then later as a Substitute Teacher. I was encouraged by the previous Principal, Donald Fitz, to get the remaining college credits required by the school board to get my certification to begin subbing. He knew my heart for working with kids based on the incredibly solid reputation and great amount of respect that was given to me not only by students, but by their parents and the faculty as well. He saw how I would consistently go above and beyond what was required for me as the aftercare Director. I volunteered countless hours helping the school in the areas of need, such as Chorus Concerts, Field Days, Field Trips, PTO Events, Front Office, Clinic, etc. The Principal knew I was getting an A.A. degree in Elementary Education and saw that I had the gifting for the job. I didn't, and still don't, see it as JUST a job, but as a way to impact and educate this next generation in a positive way. In my years there, even beginning as the aftercare Director, I quickly became a household name. I was loved, respected and valued by everyone there that I had come across.

After my 4<sup>th</sup> year as the Director, I had completed the necessary credits to become certified to become a Substitute Teacher with the Broward County School Board. This was a huge milestone for me! I had worked in various schools through the aftercare program or as a Work-Study Tutor for 7 years prior. My career goal since I was 12 years old was to become a teacher just like my parents were. So, becoming a Substitute Teacher was a high achievement and step for me in meeting my ultimate goal. When I officially became a sub, the administration (knowing my history of being so well respected and responsible) saw me as the one Substitute to be the very first one called on whenever a teacher was out and for whatever period of time. They knew, and saw, that I didn't treat this position as a typical Substitute would have. I treated it as I was already fulfilling my career dreams of becoming a full-time classroom teacher. I had become so popular with all of the teachers as well, that they themselves even began to argue with each other as to who would get me first to cover their class. The students respected me so highly and always asked for me to be their Substitute to their teachers. The parents were thrilled whenever they heard "Mr. Falzone" was going to be in their child's class the next day. With full confidence in me, every parent at that school knew that their child was in good hands and wouldn't miss one bit of work when "Mr. Falzone" was there.

PTO always had events happening during the school year and there too I would always be helping out and lending a hand. Several times it was told to me by the PTO and PTO President that when they advertise an event coming up, they would put "Mr. Falzone's" name on the poster or flyer because the students of the school would then want to attend because of how popular I was. There I did everything I could to help that school. From DJ'ing events, to playing huge annual concerts with my band to raise money for the school, to just having my presence there at many events. I did everything I could, even off the time clock, to help make that school successful.

My dedication to the school is just one reason why I am completely devastated that allegations of such horrible behavior were ever made against me! I have always had nothing but respect for the students, parents, faculty, and administration of Sheridan Hills Elementary, just like I have with every other school I've been a part of. My ultimate goal, along with the administration, is to get my Bachelor's Degree and become a teacher at Sheridan Hills. Unfortunately, that dream was tarnished by a few students who, possibly out of jealousy for "Mr. Falzone's" attention, accused me of inappropriate acts against them. In the 12 years I've been working in schools, aftercares, camps, and children's ministries in churches, I have NEVER, even once, received any complaint by a child or parent of any sort of inappropriate acts of any kind. In fact, I would always hear the opposite. I've received the highest compliments regarding my behavior, maturity, responsibility, respect, conduct, compassion, dedication, etc. My bosses of the different companies would hear the same about me. The only reason that I could see why these accusations would have come up is perhaps from jealousy. It was known by several teachers, who also would tell me, that there were several young female students who had a crush on "Mr. Falzone." It was also brought to my attention by other teachers that the [REDACTED] who have accused me would compete with each other, even though they are [REDACTED] friends, for "Mr. Falzone's" attention just getting help with the work assigned to them during class. These particular girls were always completely comfortable with me and being around me, even until the end of the school year. My last encounter with them was in the cafeteria after school while aftercare was in progress. I was setting up my sound equipment for the Spring Concert which I had worked so hard with the Principal and Music Teacher to plan. When I entered the cafeteria with more equipment, I saw [REDACTED] on the stage wanting to help. I had to sternly tell them that I didn't need any of their help and that they needed to go back to their aftercare group and said goodbye in an authoritative tone that they probably heard as very terse. I could tell they left very upset with me. Next thing I know, the very next day, they were accusing me of doing horrible things like touching their buttocks 7 months prior. All along, they have never had a problem with me and obviously so much so that they wanted to be my helpers in setting up for the show. Prior to this period, I had moved to Tennessee in January of 2013 for 4 months to work at a church up there. Upon my return to the school in the beginning of May, these same girls were completely thrilled that I was back! Their reactions to being reprimanded by me and their immediate and subsequent accusations with conveniently coordinated statements very strongly suggest that allegations of actions which allegedly occurred back in December of 2012 were fabricated because they felt shunned.

It was also known about the accuser [REDACTED] by other teachers/faculty as well, that she too had a very big crush on "Mr. Falzone" and would lie to her teachers so she could come visit me while I was teaching. She would tell her teachers that she was going to the restroom then appear at the door to my classroom as I was in the middle of teaching. She was also known, by the Principal herself, to be a liar. [REDACTED] was part of the dance group I had assisted the Principal, Mrs. Campbell, in putting together. [REDACTED] was eventually kicked out of the group due to excessive lying. During the [REDACTED] picnic at which she alleged that I had touched her inappropriately, I was DJ'ing the picnic like I am asked to do every year. For this particular picnic, I had positioned my table with equipment right next to the grill where one of the [REDACTED] teachers was cooking the food, and also amongst all of the PTO members. I only saw [REDACTED] once that day when she came by and I only had said hi and invited her to join the teachers and other students in the line dancing in which all were participating. Never once did I even make any physical contact with her. Not even for a hug of any kind. I was busy teaching the line dance to everyone during that time as well. Unfortunately, it stands to reason that she would not fear making

a false accusation regarding me doing something to inappropriate to her because she was on her way to middle school and wouldn't ever have to deal with the repercussions of what this has caused.

At no point in the investigation are any of the children questioned regarding the timing of the allegations, events leading up to their decision to make the accusation, the uniparent-teacher relationship issues that were present in the behavior of the girls, or any other contextual information which would have shed light on the "coincidence" of these children coming forward with artificially coordinated statements. Unfortunately, the results of the investigation which I had hoped would clear my name, has only served to record the allegations of the children, and not to actually put questions to them which would clarify the underlying motives behind the false reports. In fact, one of the children who leveled these underserving and spiteful accusations against me sent me a "friend request" on my Facebook account on Tuesday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014, which I, of course, rejected. (Please see attached screen shot.

These accusations, of course, are a very serious matter and I treat these proceedings with the utmost respect due to the nature and sensitivity of the behavior alleged. Like I have stated before, I have spent 12 years in schools, aftercare, camps, and children's ministries in various churches and have NEVER received a complaint from anyone...student or adult. I have always kept my integrity and character in line. Never faltered. I have NEVER EVER touched a child on the buttocks or any private area and categorically deny the allegations made in this case as actions that I have never taken or would EVER take. I grew up in church and have been trusted to run ministries within churches, including music ministries. I have always held the respect of those I encounter and I'm confident that everyone will always give the same positive response about me, my character, my integrity, my values, my morals, my mannerisms, and my conduct. I have learned through all of this that, although I believed that hugging children with others present would be enough to guard against false allegations of misconduct, I have chosen that, going forward, I will never hug a child in a school setting. Even though I have always done so with the purest of intention, I realize that it may be seen or taken in the wrong way and can be used against me. I have learned that it doesn't take hugging a child to let them know that as a teacher I'm there for them and want to support them. Even though there is no rule against appropriate and careful hugging of students by teachers, my popularity among the children, as well as the fact that male teachers are so rare in elementary schools both make me an easy target for a child with a false accusation. This was a massive learning experience for me!! I would still love the chance to continue my dream that I know God has given me and the ability to do it extremely well. I would love the chance to be allowed to continue my education towards my Bachelor's degree to eventually become one of the absolute BEST teachers that the Broward County School Board has ever seen!! I take what this situation has taught me to reshape how I interact with students and not allow anything like this to ever become an issue again. My passion is teaching! Teaching kids to read, write, count, add, subtract, multiply, divide, science, history, etc. That's my passion and that's my heart. I hold what God has given me with great pride and want to do it to the best of my ability. Please don't allow a false, unproven, and obviously ill-intended allegation to interfere with that opportunity.

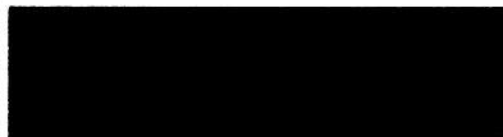
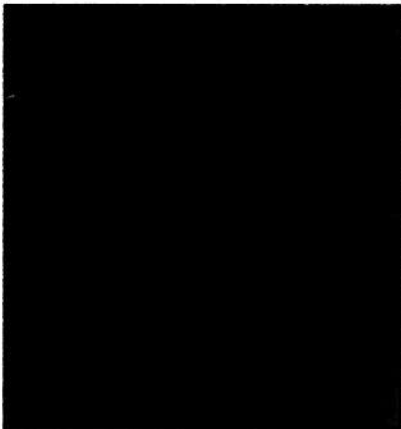
Whole Heartedly,

Christopher Falzone

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