

Voices for Educational Equity

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“Social and Emotional Learning”



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Schooling, perhaps understandably, has always stressed cognitive development as the primary way of learning and knowing. Indeed, until the last half of the twentieth century most schooling, outside mathematics and the laboratory sciences, consisted of rote memorization of “factual” information. A major breakthrough occurred with Howard Gardner’s research on multiple intelligences beginning in the 1980’s, research on differing student learning styles, and the emergence of the special education field to address needs of students with a variety of learning disabilities. Today, social emotional learning has emerged as a discrete educational focus, not only to address special student needs but to acknowledge the wide range of backgrounds and cultural experiences that influence student success.

Voices for Educational Equity is the online scholarly journal of the Center for Success in High-Need Schools posted on the Center website <http://www.center4success.com>. *Voices* articles, opinion columns, and book and media reviews reflect contemporary educational priorities, including growing societal concerns about impacts of inequity. *Voices* highlights scholarly research and innovative educator ideas and practices regarding emerging as well as persistent longtime issues and invites the perspectives of all stakeholders to promote a

productive dialogue. Unsolicited scholarly articles will be reviewed by scholar referees in the article subject field.

Articles, columns, and reviews for publication in *Voices for Educational Equity* should be submitted as Word document email attachments to Jerry Berberet, Ph.D., editor-in-chief (wgberberet@aol.com). Case studies addressing equity concerns are especially welcomed. Articles and case studies should be approximately 2,500-5,000 words and include a short author bio, an abstract of 100-200 words, a brief review of relevant research literature bearing on the article subject, a discussion of findings and results, a conclusion, and a reference bibliography. Columns are opinion pieces, ordinarily of 500-1,000 words, reflecting the views of the author. Book and media reviews should be 500-750 words in length. Authors are invited to email Jerry Berberet or call him (850-766-2656) to discuss a potential submission, request referee protocols, or to ask questions. Past issues of the journal can be viewed on the Center's website; <http://www.center4success.com>

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Social and Emotional Learning: Evolution of the Falcone Method

by Madeline Falcone

Author Bio

Madeline Falcone began her professional journey as a special education teacher for grades K-12. Early in her career, Madeline developed her skills through study of various methodologies and collaboration with like-minded professionals who shared her awareness that persons who face learning/behavioral and other challenges require wide-ranging individualized interventions from a compassionate, connected teacher. Through her experience in various school settings, Madeline realized that most public educational institutions did not allow her the latitude to incorporate her more holistic and individualized approach, and she departed from public education to complete a master's degree and become a licensed marriage and family therapist. In 1988, she founded Falcone Institute, a holistic psychotherapeutic and psychoeducational center focused on serving children and families who experience learning and social emotional challenges. Falcone Institute's mission is "Transforming lives by teaching clients the skills to learn how to learn." Over the past several decades, Madeline developed the Falcone Method which integrates her lived experience and intuition with her formal education and diverse teaching and therapeutic methodologies. At its core, the Falcone Method is based on the premise that the therapeutic process must simultaneously address clients' emotional and educational needs to achieve successful outcomes and true transformation. She may be reached madelinemft@falconeinstitute.com.

Abstract

Falcone Institute is a nonresidential psychotherapeutic and psycho-educational facility that supports individuals ages 3 – adulthood who experience cognitive, social, emotional, and academic skill deficits. Parents with children who frequently demonstrate learning and social emotional issues that interrupt and adversely impact normal and healthy development seek Falcone's services to remediate such issues. Falcone Institute's developmental approach fosters the child's internal locus of control and personal mastery of social, emotional, and academic functioning. Falcone's mission is "teaching skills that change lives forever by helping people learn how to learn." As founder and owner of Falcone, I incorporate what I have learned from my childhood and family experiences, as well as influences from my teaching and therapist careers and the energetic research findings of leading scholars—critical components of my understanding of social and emotional learning processes and dysfunction. The Institute's success owes to a comprehensive treatment regime adapted to the specific needs and circumstances of each child implemented over their program duration.

Childhood Influences

By the time I was four years old I knew that my destiny was to be a teacher. I would have my younger brother sit at the table being the “student” while I would teach him whatever I knew. I felt driven to learn and to teach. I had a passion for reading because words expanded my mind and conveyed new ideas. Although many of the ideas that I desired to share were not readily accepted within my family structure at that time, my reading world was a place where not to be seen nor heard provided a safe space within which I became a very astute observer. Consequently, as a child I remained quiet regarding most of my thoughts which blended well with my desire to do good and to be a “good” eldest daughter. My ability to become internally still and quiet, while maintaining a detached observational state watching others interact, would dissolve quickly when I was the focus of ridicule and disapproval. In those situations, my ability to maintain an internal balanced state of awareness plunged into an abyss of shame, unworthiness, and incompetency. Being the eldest daughter, I was not a favored son in my traditional, Italian patriarchal family. Being precocious was not a highly valued female attribute; in my family I was neither to be seen or heard.

Naturally there are advantages to maintaining detached awareness, stillness, and invisibility. I learned how to listen, observe, and feel the impact of the stories and metaphors shared by the adult males around the family table. My father being the only family member who served in WW11 would share stories with my grandfathers who served in WW1. They frequently told stories about how survival required “hunch” (intuitive) smartness and a strong mind.

Throughout my development, my father was a big believer in the power of the mind. He would tell a story about being in army basic training—running those many miles; when his feet became tired he would “put them in his pocket and keep on running.” We would laugh; yet how many times have I used my mind to manage challenging situations? Though the mind is not the brain, the mind uses the brain as a vehicle to organize and convey thoughts through words and body expressions. I have always been curious about how or what it is within each person that influences the interaction between their mind and brain. Though generally speaking each person has the same brain composition, people present enormous diversity in their actual functioning.

In addition to my upbringing with my dad’s belief in the power of the mind, I was raised in an extended Italian family with an aunt diagnosed at the time with what is now considered Schizoid Affective Disorder. If my aunt did not take her medication, she would become psychotic and require hospitalization. My aunt was a bright, lovely woman with a good sense of humor whose brain at times caused her mind to visit places and spaces that are not part of our three-dimensional reality. As my aunt lived with my family and I was the eldest daughter, I would attend the hospital’s required “family therapy” sessions with my mother. Being an impressionable high school teenager, attending such “therapeutic” sessions was both challenging and painfully confusing, yet

emotionally expansive. While my father “put his feet in his pocket” at such times, my mother deposited her pain and confusion in her heart. What I did not realize then was that my family beliefs, pain, and healing would be the foundation for my passion to understand those I chose to learn with and from—individuals with social emotional developmental issues.

Education

I loved reading *Scientific American* magazines in college, not because I understood all the content, but because articles frequently described brain functioning, brain electrical circuitry, neuro-cognitive development, the senses, and explained the interaction between parts of the brain. In college I took the only pre-med neurology class offered, not because I was perusing a science career but because I was so curious about the brain. The course content was way above my scientific background; I was not adept at locating the parts of the brain on those brain slides! Yet, that course allowed me to glimpse the still vast unknown of the brain. I was fascinated and intimidated all at the same time! Although my grade was only average in that class, I gained enough confidence to keep dabbling in *Scientific American* magazines and to seek out other articles about discoveries in neuroscience. I became especially intrigued when I read about Roger Sperry’s research on Split Brain Theory, for which he won the 1981 Nobel Prize (Nobel Prize Outreach, 2022). A new inner world emerged for me that ventured to explain how the bodymind is directly connected and under the influence of the brain.

I chose psychology as the focus of my college studies because of my fascination with the mind, human behavior, creativity, and my desire to better understand how my lovingly dysfunctional upbringing could contribute both to my emotional insecurity, conflict, and confusion, and yet the strong caring and compassion I felt. I realize now that my deep level of emotional discomfort and confusion was the very platform that influenced my motivation to understand how brain functioning, emotions, learning, and behaviors are connected. My innate passion to make sense of my personal conflicts and confusion propelled me to explore subject matter of which I had no formal training. I loved learning and my desire to understand drove me to study brain science and psychology. Realizing that I could make some sense out of my experiences and confused feelings by learning about the brain-body interrelationship was motivating. In high school a special education (SPED) teacher, Mrs. H., whom I supported as a TA for one semester, was a major influence. Observing her skilled student-teacher interactions and how she supported individuals with physical, cognitive, and emotional developmental delays touched my heart and confirmed my choice of career path. So, in college I chose psychology as my major with SPED as my teaching minor.

As an undergraduate I worked as a SPED teaching assistant in an inner-city middle school for students with severe learning and emotional issues. I was fortunate to have an eccentric and creative teacher mentor who was uninterested in labeling a child's past. Rather, she focused on acknowledging her students' experiences in relation to their current level of emotional development and academic skill functioning. Mrs. R. encouraged me to both understand and experience how a person's social emotional development factors into their cognitive and social emotional learning. As a result, I learned how to informally assess and support students' social emotional development and basic skills learning. It was imperative that individual and group academic basic skills be taught in conjunction with social skill development as a means of insuring that these "problem" students would have the social emotional and cognitive competence necessary to be successful in future educational programs and society. She mentored me and the students with the motto "none of these kids are bad, they are just a product of their environment and need skills..."

Teaching Career

Though I did not realize my good fortune at the time, I began my regular full-time teaching career in 1973 in a nontraditional "continuation school" educational environment for "last chance" students. In the vernacular of 1973, those students were called "juvenile delinquents." The continuation school was staffed with master teachers who mentored me based on their direct observation of my peer and student interactions. In the rich learning environment of my teaching intern position, I received valuable feedback throughout my day. I was encouraged to trust my intuition and expand my emotional and cognitive limits, while becoming aware of areas where I was ineffective. Importantly, the philosophical and teaching approaches I experienced during my first full time teaching position as a continuation education teacher resonated with and expanded on my earlier TA experiences, when I worked for two years as a teacher's aide in an inner-city school in San Diego, and on my college graduation as a SPED long-term sub at Lincoln High School in Stockton. Years later, I figured out that I was hired under the assumption (even though it was the first year that women and first year teachers were permitted to teach in continuation schools) that I could manage the students because I had survived my inner-city teaching experience. In short, I walked into a continuation school teaching environment that supported my introspective predisposition and fostered the expansion of my teaching skills while enhancing my awareness and educational methodologies.

During those first seven years of teaching, I functioned in an "amoeba environment"—a flexible, holistic setting focusing on the individual needs of each student— which fostered personal introspection, emotional development, and didactic learning while maintaining boundaries. In addition to the self-accountability I learned during these years, my personal and professional development earned me the privilege of mentoring incoming teachers. Overall, the ambiance was one of deep trust, mutual respect, and intense passion for everyone on the team to be successful in achieving

transformation both with each student as well as within ourselves. Each student entering the continuation school was in a high-risk position, a final opportunity to remain in public education.

As an educational team, we embraced holistic teaching incorporating team sports, movement, stretching, emotions, and cognitive learning methods in all academic content and personal development areas. Through the inquiry method of Socratic questioning (SQ), as applied in *Bloom's Taxonomy* (Bloom, 1956), we ensured that students were learning through all modalities for cognitive understanding and practical applications—not simply regurgitating content. The philosophical discussions regarding social emotional and other areas of learning fascinated me and nourished my passion to be an effective and positive teacher who created a vibrant and meaningful classroom. The emphasis was on my being present for the students before me and for creating a classroom ambiance that fostered a desire to learn while implementing Bloom's taxonomy and Socratic questioning methods. The curriculum I learned in my SPED classes was being meaningfully applied. Though a challenging and very steep learning curve for me, I was excited to see positive results.

Works that significantly influenced my early perspectives on teaching and my future profession include Neil Postman & Charles Weingartner, *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (1969), and Sidney B. Simon, Leland W Howe, and Howard Kirschebaum, *Values Clarification, A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students* (1972). Postman and Weingartner presented insights pertinent to educational issues we faced in 1972 and still face in 2022. Their analysis addressed teacher attributes for an inquiry classroom, behaviors of good learners who are comfortable with learning and languaging, making learning relevant, and sparking creativity and imagination. They offered advice on how educators in the classroom might best support, reframe, and teach bright individuals whose learning and emotional experiences are wrought with conflict. Postman and Weingartner's first principle: "There can be no significant innovation in education that does not have at its center the attitudes of teachers.... the beliefs, feelings, and assumptions of the teacher are the air of the learning environment; they determine the quality of life within it." (p.33) In other words, the teacher's perceptions and bias that affect the quality of life within the subject area and social emotional learning environment require that teachers become aware of their own perceptions and bias.

As a continuation school team we learned, experienced, taught and implemented values clarification using Socratic questioning (SQ), Bloom's Taxonomy and various inquiry strategies as means of facilitating cognitive and emotional awareness. Through the values inquiry method, students became aware of their personal bias, choices, beliefs, feelings, and their applicability to both personal and academic areas. Whether individually or in a group setting, regardless of the subject matter, addressing clarification of the students' values helped them to become aware of their own feelings, ideas, and beliefs. Bloom provided a structure for critical analysis, sequential reasoning,

and practical applications regarding their understanding of their values. As students gained self-awareness, they began to understand how to take ownership of their beliefs and actions, thus developing personal accountability. The wonderful spillover was that I, too, became cognizant of my personal values and developed a higher level of emotional awareness.

There are a couple of critical reasons that I survived those very intense first couple of years teaching. First, I survived because I am by nature an adventurous person who likes to master challenges; and second, because I was raised in a large extended Italian family. Being raised in an extended family is a psychological and sociological study in and of itself! As one of many students choosing psychology as a major, I wanted to understand and unravel the various dysfunctions I observed and experienced in my family system. Frequently in large families (perhaps in any family!) a variety of spoken and unspoken psychological/sociological dysfunctions provide a rich learning foundation for exposure to both life's joyful and painful experiences. I was born into a family environment that created emotional confusion requiring sociological study to understand. Through personal experience and observation, I eventually realized that each family member's unhealthy decisions were generally an expression of their unresolved pain. Their emotional pain was the precipitating factor for their personal suffering, unhealthy actions, and sometimes destructive behaviors towards others.

My background as an inner-city teacher's aide and long-term substitute teacher for students with severe learning and emotional issues qualified me for teaching in a continuation education school. Continuation education provides an alternative accredited learning environment for students who are unable to function successfully in a mainstream educational environment. So, my first teaching assignment was in an environment engaging with individuals in grades 7 – 12 who had been either expelled, had dropped out, were pregnant, or were just unable to function in a traditional educational setting, but desired to earn a high school diploma. I became an educational generalist who individualized the student's content learning and their demonstration of content mastery according to the student's cognitive and emotional developmental level. This student population required a flexible and flowing educational structure where the classroom "teacher" functioned as a teacher-facilitator who individualized student content learning into modules, with content mastery to be demonstrated in a variety of ways. Emotional intelligence was especially valued given that each student was removed from the comprehensive educational system due to some major behavioral issue.

I was privileged to collaborate with a passionate team of exceptionally talented and diversified educators for whose mentorship I am forever indebted. These seasoned, creative individuals taught me how to organize individualized content learning packets that both met individual students'

emotional interests and fostered their reading, comprehension, and writing developmental levels. Fashioning these learning packets that became the student's course content taught me how to expand my creativity and to integrate relevant, multimodal, experiential learning material from sources outside traditional textbooks. One reason for such expansiveness was that the school provided a full-time counselor, team teaching, collaboration meetings, and implementation of group and individual social communication methods that encouraged both content and philosophical discussions and values clarification strategizing. The continuation school goal was to support teachers' cognitive and emotional development that in turn facilitated both the interpersonal and intrapersonal cognitive and social development of the students. Though I was the teacher, I became the "learner" when listening to these very bright, out of the box creative thinkers called "students" communicate about their experiences, perceptions, passions, and goals. They were, as Malcolm Gladwell wrote in his book *Outliers* (2008), "something that is situated from or classed differently from a main or related body," (p. 3). I realized that my students just did not fit into the confinements of a conventional educational system and, therefore, were labeled very differently than individuals attending a conventional comprehensive school. Frequently, they entered the program with anger and mistrust because they felt betrayed not only by the conventional learning system, but also by their family, friends, and a society that they believed did not support their needs. These developing young people were struggling to understand their differences, heal their pain, and learn how to live meaningful lives.

The continuation education structure's secret ingredient was the rapport and respect that developed between the teacher and student. These students demanded my authenticity and a level of personal vulnerability that my teacher education courses never referenced. Thus, I was forced to draw on my life experience, my intuition, my previous mentors, and my student teacher experiences which had taught me how to maintain fluid boundaries while establishing rapport. I learned that respectful and heartfelt relational connections are a required foundation before gaining permission to enter the realm of a student's personal and learning vulnerabilities. Each student had to believe that I was an in touch, emotionally developing teacher who would remain present for them as they revealed their story.

In his book *The Four Pivots*, Shawn A. Ginwright (2022) compassionately conceptualized for me how, through my personal introspection and emotional healing, I was able to relate to my students in ways that gained their trust and confidence in my motives. Though I was dearly loved by my parents, I was raised as the eldest daughter in a patriarchal Italian family within which many of the childhood caretaking experiences that I was expected to manage were both beyond my developmental level and very anxiety producing. Consequently, as I began teaching socially and emotionally challenged students, I realized that I needed my own therapeutic support. Through my personal introspection, I learned how to transform that which was emotionally significant into wisdom and

understanding. Because many of the experiences during my upbringing were emotionally impactful, when Ginwright declares, “social change is deeply connected to our own healing, reflection, and wellbeing” (p., 36), he speaks for me a timeless truth. Ginwright’s “healing centered leadership” speaks to educators whose personal awareness must begin from within, so that when challenging situations occur with their students, the teacher can demonstrate courageous vulnerability and be authentically present in that moment. Ginwright communicates powerfully about these shifts while compassionately supporting each person—teacher and student—moving from a constrictive to an expansive social emotional framework, a framework that flows in an amoeba-like manner which incorporates and embraces breakdowns, while supporting and embracing breakthroughs.

The richness of those expansive years allowed me to learn how to maintain rapport through being authentic and vulnerable with individuals who could not tolerate anything less. They were in the alternative educational system because of their rebellion against a conventional educational system they perceived as inauthentic and disconnected from their needs. Each student and I worked collaboratively to develop bonds encapsulated in *Four Pivots*’ principles—self-awareness, care and compassion, creative problem solving, and focus on what is possible—that allowed us to blossom. The students learned how to learn and develop emotional maturity; I learned how to become a flexible creative educator able to heal many of my personal wounds and learning insecurities, in many respects a reflection that I was not so different from many of my precocious students.

I entered teaching aware of a broad spectrum of life’s joys and painful realities, which taught me how to maintain excellent boundaries, notice subtle nonverbal messages, be intuitive, and respect the students while not being intimidated by their bravado facades. In fact, their facades touched my heart and allowed for more humane relatability, as I realized they lacked many of the skills I knew they needed to transform their lives. They just had to trust me; coming from where I came from, I knew how to gain their trust and respect. So, teaching emotionally complicated and highly expressive individuals was like going into an extended Italian family full of emotional complexities and passions.

The environmental format utilized in the classroom was an informal but structured approach that required the teacher to function as a generalist rather than as a specific highly structured content teacher. Therefore, content courses were individualized contracts between the teacher and student, that followed a required rubric. The contract designated the number of course content hours which translated into the number of units the student would receive. Each contract was individually designed to address the student’s cognitive and social-emotional development. The curriculum selection, demonstration of mastery, and specific materials were discussed with the student.

After seven years of continuation education, I transitioned into a traditional elementary school where I was the site SPED teacher for grades K-6 for four years. After my elementary experience, I transitioned into a comprehensive high school where I taught as a grades 9-12 SPED teacher for four more years. Transitioning from an alternative educational environment with team collaboration and fluid teaching methodologies into a traditional teaching environment proved to be quite challenging. Though the students were truly impressive, being a teacher required to function within a much more constricted, prescribed structure with scripted curriculum felt inhibiting. At the elementary level, teachers unaware of the long-term emotional repercussions of implementing unhealthy, shameful disciplinary methods, used whatever means they could to manage their classroom while teaching basic skills. The elementary students in SPED frequently demonstrated emotional, social, and academic skill deficits. When teachers based their success on student levels of skill acquisition, SPED students frequently lost out. Developing attributes of the “good learner” frequently never happened, given many times the boys became unruly while the girls became invisible—both behaviors depressing classroom skill acquisition and reinforcement.

After my first year at the high school level, I realized that too many of the SPED children I saw from K-12 were emotionally misunderstood and cognitively underestimated. These students who were in SPED for various reasons required alternative teaching methodologies to address their learning disabilities and/or were not learning due to some emotional trauma that the classroom educator was unable to massage. Consequently, by the time these students were in upper elementary, they were demonstrating unhealthy social emotional choices and were significantly behind academically.

The wrenching issue was that many of these children had average or above average intellectual abilities, although demonstrating low reading levels and/or not comprehending or conceptualizing language at a rate commensurate with their grade level. Frequently, many of these beautiful individuals became their “label.” They began acting as if they were “stupid,” exhibiting a belief that they would never be able to break the reading code or understand how to understand—so why bother? They were filled with shame and believed, true to their “label,” that their potential was limited which adversely affected their self-esteem and behaviors. Frequently, educators who focused on such student avoidant behaviors and unhealthy choices unintentionally reinforced this vicious cycle, rather than addressing student depressed learning skills. Inadvertently, such educators were enabling these students to become socially and emotionally dysfunctional individuals because they were not being seen, heard, or supported in a manner that provided for meaningful learning and healthier emotional functioning. Even if people have a genetic predisposition to social emotional dysfunction, they are inadvertently enabled when they do not receive the specific interventions that they need. Many of my SPED students could not understand the rules of the social

game, they could not break the reading comprehension code, and/or they came from dysfunctional home environments.

Falcone Institute: Evolution of the Falcone Method

My holistic vision of education had begun to develop in 1982, when I was still teaching in public schools and embraced educational and therapeutic services for the whole individual, parents, and school personnel. In 1984, when I realized that my holistic vision for addressing the needs of SPED students could not be accomplished in a traditional high school, I resigned from public education. I completed my MFT internship, married, had a child, and became a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) upon completion of a LMFT master's degree. I began my LMFT career as an individual psychoeducational therapist with a passion to serve and support children who lack the skills required to succeed emotionally and academically in a holistic manner. So, what began as the Learning Alliance serendipitously and seamlessly became Falcone Institute in the 1990s, as I hired individuals desiring an internship where they enhanced their psychological introspection, learning skills, and understanding of holistic psychoeducational therapy methods. What became known as the Falcone Method was based on my premise always to address the whole individual, whether they were employees or clients, realizing that emotions are the foundation for our overall development. Consequently, Falcone Institute developed a healing practice where children with emotional, behavioral, social, and learning disorders could learn how to master required emotional, social, and learning skill sets. The Falcone motto, "Falcone Institute teaches skills that help people learn how to learn," applies to Falcone's holistic focus and applies to employees as well as to the clients being served and supported. Learning how to learn eventually became a self-generative skill set that enhanced their ability to maximize and demonstrate their overall potential. In addition, individuals employed at Falcone Institute learned through mentorship how to address their limiting beliefs and values and heal their wounds through awareness, essentially to experience the *Four Pivots* transformation as I had.

I also determined that the learning issues of individuals who experience them require a developmentally based, individualized skills assessment and psychological treatment plan for each client. Therefore, the holistic Falcone Method program I developed encompasses seven related domains: *Emotional Intelligence, Bodymind Integration, Language, Critical Thinking, Academics, Athleticism, and Family Intelligence*. The priority focus for each client depends on the psychological, somatic, and learning issues each client individually presents, plus previous assessments and teacher and parental concerns. I triage clients to establish priorities that expedite a decrease in unhealthy behaviors and attitudes. Given that the Institute functions in a holistic amoeba-like manner, all team members, including administrative personnel, are required to utilize Socratic questioning with clients, attend weekly client team meetings, and participate in professional in-services regarding cognitive, social-emotional, psychological, and developmental knowledge and methodologies. A fundamental premise is that each person employed by Falcone Institute understands that

they will experience significant changes within themselves; their Falcone Institute experience will transform them.

In addition to learning about the client's learning, social emotional self, and neurological factors and traumas, Falcone Institute's psychoeducational coaches and administrative team also learn about their own vulnerabilities and fears. It is imperative for any person who chooses to engage with individuals experiencing SED issues to learn how to be comfortable feeling uncomfortable and vulnerable. That is what happens while in the presence of clients who are hurting so intensely and asking some very hard questions while presenting deep pain. My bias is that our personal exploration, knowledge of neurophysiology and cognition, and personal healthiness are imperative when supporting social emotional growth. Our ongoing SED is imperative because our own personal awareness must continue to expand so we can facilitate and model for those seeking our guidance—qualities of authentic connection, compassion, and heartfelt vulnerability. We must transform in order for others to do so.

When I decided to begin my LMFT therapeutic practice, I stepped out of the traditional teaching role to present my focus as a psychoeducational LMFT. I chose to enact my vision of a more holistic and fluid philosophy which included encompassing the whole child. Thus, I decided to include the child's educational issues as well as their psychological, behavioral, and familial issues in their treatment sessions. Though educated in various therapeutic modalities, most of which were verbally based, I made the decision to expand the traditional talking or experiential approaches to include the child's educational and learning requirements. Therefore, I decided to use what I refer to as the "Amoeba Back Door Method" which focuses on those areas where the child experiences much emotional learning frustration and cognitive confusion.

An amoeba has flexible boundaries that maintain a structure that is not rigid; thus, the amoeba refers to maintaining an energetic flow throughout the client session. Evidence-based educational and therapeutic methodologies are implemented during the client's sessions to address cognitive and emotional skill development. I also address their lack of emotional regulation and their academic and social skill issues through movement, relaxation, and sound.

Briefly, the "Amoeba Back Door Method" is my conceptualization of maintaining flexible boundaries while addressing seriously impactful SED issues using SQ, direct instruction, and movement, as they related to learning required academic and social skill sets. Thus, I was simultaneously addressing students' cognitive learning challenges and their immature emotional development. As students' cognitive skills developed, their confidence and emotional awareness increased while their frustration and reactivity decreased. The back door was using their academics and learning challenges, which revealed their related emotional triggers, as a means to address their immature and unresolved social emotional issues. An amoeba reminds me to maintain flexible boundaries

that encompass/surround an emotional issue that unexpectedly presents itself when the client is communicating about a “triggering” topic.

While teaching at the continuation school, movement was a primary method used to diffuse explosive, repressed or stuck emotions. I learned that movement methodologies—breathing, yawning, stretching, dancing, running, laughing, walking, skipping, playing volleyball— even for a brief period of time -- would recalibrate the individual’s neurophysiological state and generally allow for follow-through with the previously challenging requested learning task. Consequently, in the early 1980’s, when I was exposed to Paul and Gail Dennison’s educational kinesiology (Edu-K or Brain Gym®), I jumped on the material of their courses because they addressed the whole person. I was intrigued with the principles behind the Dennison’s Edu-K, which integrated such fields as psychology, neuroscience and developmental optometry in specific movements that enhanced learning while decreasing stress. Through their *Educational Kinesiology In-Depth, The Seven Dimensions of Intelligence* (1984, rev.1995) training sessions, I mastered muscle testing while integrating my own emotional and learning challenges which I discovered are similar to those of other human beings though with uniquely different solutions.

The Dennison’s created an eclectic approach that synthesizes the work of many experts in the field of education, kinesiology, and movement. Concepts from Newell Kephart, Carl Rogers, Howard Gardner, and many others from the field of educational philosophy were integrated with concepts that George Goodheart, John Diamond, John Thie and others developed, with the movement expertise of masters such as Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, and others. Paul Dennison synthesized works of these experts to create a methodology where “application of specific movements which activate the brain for optimal storage and retrieval of information occurs ... through re-educating the whole mind/body for greater ease and efficiency of function.” (1995)

Research Contributions Since Creation of Falcone Institute

In 1991, in his book, *Brain and Perception: Holonomy and Structure in Figural Processing*, Karl Pribram presented his model of the holographic brain or the hologram brain. Pribram, a neurosurgeon, discovered that the brain has waves within small neural networks that create localized holograms within the larger workings of the brain. The holonomy concept meant that the right and left side of the brain via the corpus collosum communicate as one whole brain. Pribram’s research produced the fascinating finding that the brain follows the same rules as quantum mechanics. That is the brain functions as an interconnected whole that includes the interconnection of emotions.

In 1997 neuroscientist Candice Pert, in her groundbreaking book *Molecules of Emotions*, eloquently explained that humans are fundamentally emotional beings. Prior to Pert’s work scientists

knew that each of our cells is a biochemical factory. Pert discovered that each cell of our body is a biochemical organism with opiate receptors that attract those peptides that transmit emotional states. Each cell's biochemical emotional receptors link with our opiate emotional receptors. Our cellular emotional biochemical opiate receptors link up with peptides (an amino acid chain) that biochemically transmit the emotional state we are experiencing. Very simply, our emotional opiate receptors search for the cell that they can hook up with, link with so that we experience a biochemical state that we then interpret as an emotion. Pert's discovery was mainly focused on addressing addiction and aids patients. She realized that all human emotions travel through these peptide receptors that connect with our cells. So, from a microbiological or cellular perspective opiate biochemical peptides that are attracted to the molecules in our cells create our emotional state. We use language to identify and label these molecules as emotions.

Just as substance abuse addicts become habituated to certain neurophysiological states, so, too, do individuals become emotionally addicted to certain neurophysiological states. Just as a person addicted to a substance can learn how to change their biochemical state, so, too, can a person addicted to emotional states expand their *awareness* and change emotionally. Emotions are biochemical substances—molecules that we can and do become addicted to and are influenced by our perceptions. When thinking about the fundamental essence of what an "emotion" really is, it is a form of biochemical energy that is in motion (Pert, 1997).

Developmental biologist Bruce Lipton, in *Biology of Belief: How our Language Influences our Perceptions* (2008), substantiated Pert's molecular research and the premise in Grinder, Bandler, Bandler, Dilts, DeLozier, *Neuro-Linguistic Programming* (Vol 1, 1980) that "words go to our nerves." Lipton's research delved into the interaction between our neuropeptides and proteins—the building blocks of our RNA and DNA—that influence our biochemistry and genetic predisposition. Lipton's research dramatically impacted the field of energy psychology regarding how our belief systems—what we say to ourselves that influences our perceptions—epigenetically influence our body-mind connections. Our perceptions, many of which occur automatically influenced by our unconscious emotional experience, flow through us to shape our beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions. Emotionally impactful words affect our nerves and heighten the serotonin dopamine receptors in our brain. Emotionally biochemically evoking words go directly to our nerves and affect our perceptions which are intimately entwined with our thoughts and language. How we perceive is what we say to ourselves and what we say to ourselves is what we perceive. Pert and Lipton's scientific evidence documented what Grinder *et al* asserted twenty-eight years earlier.

These scientific findings verified what I learned from childhood, i.e., the words we use go to our emotional nerves, reinforcing our thought patterns that eventually become our perceived reality.

Our perceived reality reinforces our emotional responses and subsequently directs our emotional and cognitive attitudes that shape our social emotional behaviors and interactions. I was excited because Pert's (1997) and Lipton's (2008) scientific findings substantiated that what was originally thought to be fixed DNA states were in fact malleable and influenced by what we said and did!

Daniel Goleman's 1995 bestseller *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More Than IQ*, emphasized the problematic and unhealthy consequences when emotions remain unaware and undeveloped. Goleman, a scientific reporter for *The New York Times*, discovered an article by Peter Salovey, a junior professor at Yale, and his graduate student John Mayer that offered a new way of thinking about our emotions. Salovey and Mayer proposed that emotional intelligence reconciled that which initially had been viewed as opposites—our feelings and our reasoning (1990). Goleman's premise is that emotional intelligence (EI) has four major domains with twelve EI competencies. The major components are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These domains depend on the dynamic functioning of the brain's neural circuits. The neurocircuitry interplay between the executive center, the prefrontal cortex, and the emotional circuitry center (the amygdala) influences our upsets or stimulates our motivation. Self-awareness and self-management depend on this brain activity. A separate neurocircuitry interplay between circuits in the forebrain serve to support social skills functions, including empathy.

Doc Childre, HeartMath founder, contended in the early 1980's that the heart's electromagnetic field is much more powerful than the brain's electromagnetic field (Childre,1999). Though we obviously need our brain's functioning, we require the wisdom and understanding of the heart when managing impactful experiences and situations. SED requires emotional intelligence that depends on communication between our brain and heart. The brain digests thoughts, words, and concepts, whereas the heart integrates and processes information from our heart bodymind. Given that the electromagnetic field of the heart is way more powerful than the brain's, it is important to take fear-based thoughts and feelings being experienced in the body and bring them into the heart space for digestion and healing. Generally, when an individual experiences fear-based emotions, such as anxiety, anger, sadness, and others, these emotions interrupt the neurocircuitry interplay between executive center, the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. A condensed explanation is that when in an anxiety state the thoughts and emotions hijack the executive center (cerebral cortex) and head straight to the prefrontal cortex (frontal lobes). This interruption causes us to repeat those generally counterproductive behaviors causing the body and brain to do what they know, thus reinforcing these counter-productive behaviors. Consequently, this dynamic reinforces a hamster wheel of unhealthy repetitive patterns, emotional thoughts, words and actions. Rather than assessing the situation in the moment and responding with creative awareness, the individual goes on automatic pilot and repeats that which defeats moving into more productive and less anxiety producing emotional patterns (Childre, 1999).

Emotions are the quiet inner foundation to our functioning existence. They are the primary signifier of who we are internally that demonstrates externally. All emotional experiences register within every cell of our body on a nonverbal level and then percolate and coalesce as our thoughts, words, and actions. When we experience, think, or hear the word "emotion," it is important to conceptualize waves and bubbles of energy in motion. Fundamentally, emotions are "energy in motion." As energy in motion, emotions function in either a "fear based" or "love based" biochemical state. When individuals are taught how to be sensitive to, connected with, and made aware of their emotional states, they are better able to translate their emotional experiences into somatic awareness and understanding (Pert,1997).

Max Fisher, in *The Chaos Machine,~ The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired our Minds and Our World* (2022), brilliantly provides compelling evidence that all media platforms change our brain through provoking intense emotional states. For instance, the platform You Tube's tracking eye knows every detail of what is watched, how long it was watched, and then what was clicked on next. You Tube's algorithm's topical affinity tool registers what captures the viewer's attention, then in a subtle and systematic manner begins to present more subtle emotional material to keep the person watching such engaging content. The researchers and designers specifically choose those words that will evoke the greatest emotional potential for repeated viewing and participation. The algorithmic topical affinity tracking monitor looks for patterns that are going to keep the individual engaged for longer periods of time. The patterns are based on intermittent reinforcement which frequently leads to addictive (e.g. social-sexual fixation) and aggressive behaviors (such as bullying), diminishes the ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy, and interrupts self-regulation. As a consequence, social media has created generations of individuals whose social emotional development is seriously disrupted and skewed.

Working with Parents

Parents that are referred to Falcone Institute generally come with diminished hope and high levels of fear, frustration, confusion, and concern for their child's overall wellbeing. Frequently, they are frustrated with their child's current support systems due to a lack of emotional, social, and academic progress or a very dismal prognosis by previous professionals. For many years parents only chose Falcone after they had seen several other professionals, given our holistic approach and alternative methods were frequently considered too intensive, way outside standard learning and psychological approaches, and not really needed.

Thirty years ago, Falcone began implementing methods that incorporate movement, neurophysiological balancing, visualization, breathing techniques, heart center focusing, and many other methods into psychoeducational coaching and therapeutic sessions. At that time mainstream professionals considered many of these methods to be “quackery” practices since science at that time did not support such methodologies. As cognitive, neurological, and biological sciences matured in understanding the mindbody connection and integration, these practices slowly filtered into mainstream psychology and educational methodologies. Thus, methodologies once considered “quackery” are now in the forefront of educational and psychological methodologies. Falcone methods previously considered to be questionable are increasingly scientifically supported and considered evidence-based educational and developmental strategies.

Though in the past, parents were frequently told that their child would “grow out of their symptoms,” eventually, as the child matured, parents began to realize that their child was not “growing out of their symptoms.” Their child was not successfully developing academically and was becoming more emotionally and socially distraught. Therefore, an issue that was initially considered a learning skill problem in elementary school developed into a secondary emotional issue as well, with the emotional issue demonstrating as primary in middle and high school. The child’s initial learning issue had now become secondary to more overtly impactful and pervasively consequential social and emotional issues.

Given the lack of holistic and integrative services to address their child’s issues, parents frequently took their child to a therapist for emotional issues and to tutors for learning issues. What brought them to Falcone was that success was not happening in one or both areas. Then an integrative approach that addressed the whole child and educated the family became more appealing since nothing else had worked. These parents came to Falcone because they were desperate, and Falcone was reputed to achieve positive, lasting results. Though the Falcone program significantly departed from where they had previously interviewed or attended, they agreed to become involved since nothing else had worked.

During the initial complementary half-hour phone call I get a pulse on the child’s developmental background and previous support services; hear the parent’s story of fear, anger, and frustration; and address parental impressions of Falcone based on what they have heard about our services. I tune into their limiting beliefs, personal biases, and judgements relating to their child’s abilities, motives, and attitudes. I listen with a heartfelt focus to what is being said, and more intently to how it is being stated as well as to what is not being stated. Parents are human beings who are reaching out due to their fears, frustrations, and pain because their child is unable to optimally function socially, educationally, or psychologically. I calibrate the intensity of their fear, knowledge, personality style, and marriage compatibility to begin to develop the trust required to

become a member of their child's support team. The "safety net" for parents' pain begins to develop, as the Falcone team assures parents that their child's issues will be systematically addressed. They must trust Falcone first so that we can do what we say we will do in support of their child's overall functioning.

I am a "what you see is what you get" type of person who communicates with compassion and at times passionate stridency. I present information in a direct and clear multimodal manner, massaging the message as needed to optimize parental digestion of challenging statements, to allow for their grieving, and to overcome their limiting beliefs while educating them on how they can best support themselves and their child. Family healing and education is a systematic developmental process that occurs through individual and group therapeutic sessions within which parents learn about their personality patterns and parenting styles, and experience some of the same therapeutic processes as their child. The entire therapeutic system is designed around the parents and their child to optimize everyone's cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Schools, Advocacy, and the IEP

When advocating for a client at an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) school session, Falcone looks for what is included and missing in the client's overall educational program. This includes addressing basic skills (reading, comprehension, writing, and mathematics), educational methodology, sensory integration, and athleticism. A most important area that children frequently do not qualify for is to receive speech and language services (SLP). Generally, the qualifying scores for a child to receive SLP services are very low. Many children who need such services score too high on these language assessments and, therefore, are disqualified from SLP services, a most vital support program. SLP services are designated as speech which is related to articulation or the enunciation of sounds and language, the ability to understand, interpret and communicate thoughts and ideas verbally or in writing.

All languages are comprised of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Succinctly, phonology relates to how speech sounds are organized and used in language; morphology refers to the minimal units of language used; syntax to how words are sequenced to form a sentence; semantics looks at the meanings in language; and pragmatics the use of appropriate communication in social situations. I am emphasizing language because the ability to manipulate and understand oneself and to relate to the world requires intact language processing skills. Language processing skills are vital because they directly correlate to the individual's ability to comprehend and manage all verbal and nonverbal social emotional interactions, including higher order thinking skills. When educating parents and attending IEP meetings, language processing is an area that requires detailed attention and focused advocacy in addressing the child's depressed language

skills. Frequently, subtle, uneven language skill development and language variations highly impact the child's overall pragmatic and social emotional development and academic functioning.

Falcone's advocacy style is to carefully observe how goals and objectives are worded and assessed and to "team" with the school personnel in support of the student. Looking for what is missing is important because school personnel may require education regarding the interrelatedness between the student's cognitive processes and academic and social emotional functioning. Though, at times stridency is required to assert that specific services are needed, Falcone presents itself as an adjunct support service that aligns with the school to optimize the student's success.

Schools would benefit from increased understanding of cognitive, language and SEL development in relation to student foundational learning skills, emotional resiliency methods, and familial experiences. Far too frequently, students in middle and upper grades with average to above average cognitive abilities possess underdeveloped primary learning skills but are required to demonstrate content competency on grade level material. These individuals, many of whom do not qualify for or are not SPED identified, cannot read, comprehend, write or sequence required material. Some of these students present as highly motivated with the desire to demonstrate competency, others withdraw and become disengaged and disruptive learners. Regardless of their response patterns, such students most frequently have underdeveloped basic skills. Others are SPED identified students who frequently demonstrate serious learning and emotional challenges which are not addressed by the goals and objectives written. Though the educational system does have constraints there continues to be far too many students falling through the cracks due to educators' lack of a comprehensive understanding of brain-based learning related to the student's language processing and SED issues.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It takes a village! Therapies are frequently similar; implementation of a treatment program depends upon the assessment of immediate presenting issues that determine the appropriate mix from a treatment toolbox of somatic and energy therapeutic methods, such as BodyTalk, EFT, Brain Spotting, exposure therapy, yoga, music, drumming, movement, aroma therapy, and cognitive methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Cognitive Behavior Modification with Insight (CBMI), and others. As a public-school educator, I learned how to establish meaningful and trusting relationships with my students. My continuation education mentoring taught me how to maintain appropriate boundaries while creating long term, meaningful relationships that nurtured the healing of severely emotionally impacted individuals. Some of these relationships fostered the educational, social, and emotional development of my students over my six years at the continuation school. Thus, I realized as a private practitioner that focusing on clients' SED and cognition

required establishing and maintaining rapport and a long-term relationship so that the skill sets could be learned, mastered, and generalized into their daily lives. Consequently, I have established long-term relationships with many of the families whom I have served throughout the years of my practice. Given that the practice is developmentally based and addresses the child’s cognitive, educational, emotional, and social skill sets, children can remain connected to Falcone through their adulthood.

My long career as a teacher and psychoeducational therapist leads me to the following recommendations for educators seeking to address the social emotional needs of their students:

- Teacher preparation and in-service professional development programs are needed which go beyond education in student instruction to include didactic and experiential training units that foster both teacher and student self-awareness, self-care, and emotional self-management.
- Teacher preparation and in-service programs should educate candidates and teachers on how to create, explain to students, and maintain the classroom as a fluid emotional environment where each individual is educated about emotions as “energy in motion.”
- Multimodal, didactic, and experiential SED curricula are needed for pre-K through high school students that develop student internal locus of control, student and teacher collaboration, and accountability.
- Administrative personnel with SED knowledge and discernment are needed to provide support and encouragement for teacher creativity, team collaboration, and diverse assessment and educational methodologies.

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Appendix: Falcone Client Case Studies

The experienced therapist learns how to see with a “third eye” and “hear with a third ear,” while feeling with a compassionate heart that which is said and unsaid. Sorting for what is missing and what is not said and what is denied and filling the holes in the “Swiss cheese” with scientific evidence-based alchemistic methodologies (integration of cognitive and energetic methodologies) allows for “miracles” to happen. The professional who demonstrates a compassionate and detached but highly aware presence understands that the child is always doing the very best they can in that moment, even when the child’s behavioral and verbal expression in the moment appears chaotic, aggressive, or withdrawn.

TS – Adopted 3-year-old

For example, the reactive attachment disorder (RAD) adopted child who was born tox positive (born with addictive substances in his system) as a toddler, head-butted his parents and could not tolerate being held because of his traumatic gestation and birth did learn how to reconnect and develop into a bright, humorous adolescent who dearly loves his family. His Falcone sessions began when he was three years old attending the public school system early childhood intervention program and terminated when he was 16. The Falcone team designed and monitored an individualized developmentally appropriate program that supported his cognitive, social, emotional, educational, and familial changes. Parent, sibling, and extended family education were included throughout his program. Falcone attended his Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meetings and advocated as necessary for the schools to create appropriate goals and objectives and to implement methodologies that maximized his cognitive and social emotional success. Throughout the years program intensity varied, with scaffolding in all areas to insure skill acquisition, mastery, generalization, and situational adaptation. Currently TS is successfully completing his 11th grade with the intention of attending college.

PQ Adopted 4-year-old

Falcone Institute specializes in treating trauma in adopted children. There is a disproportionately higher percentage of adopted children who demonstrate with trauma-based emotional social challenges and learning disabilities than those found in children who remain with their biological parents. When PQ, a bright, physically coordinated, and adorable adopted four-year-old came to Falcone, he presented highly impacted emotional dysregulation as intense tantrums and violent physical aggressive, oppositional defiant behaviors, or passive detachment. Given that PQ experienced prenatal trauma, was tox positive at birth and had a legacy of paternal violence, his adoptive parents were very concerned about his future wellbeing. PQ’s parents had sought counsel from previous child professionals who ascertained that the parents had the following choices, given that PQ’s prognosis for a successful future was very poor. They could medicate him as soon as he turned five and hope that medication would manage some of his impulsiveness and defiance,

otherwise he was headed for incarceration by the time he reached adolescence, as had four generations of males on his paternal side.

Therefore, given PQ's history and presenting behaviors, his Falcone developmental program began with a therapist who supported an intense somatic and aroma therapy program that included massage, sound, breathing, energy therapy, play and emotional awareness and language; and an SLP whose skills interfaced with the therapeutic sessions in an atmosphere of play that developed PQ's self-regulation and emotional language processing. The nonverbal therapeutic methods in conjunction with specific physical movements began to support his nonverbal release of intense anger and foster internal awareness and behavioral self-management skills that eventually were linked to support his emotional language development. PQ's family included his mom, a former SPED teacher, and his father, and two older sisters, all who dearly loved PQ. Given his mother's professional skills and family dedication, Falcone services supported parental education, home visits, and exposure therapy that were woven into the therapeutic program to facilitate development of cognitive, language and social emotional self-regulation.

As PQ's self-regulation became less reactive and he developed trust, he participated in a NeuroCodeX QEEG mapping analysis procedure which provided real time analysis of PQ's brain functioning when performing cognitive tasks. The NeuroCodeX integrates classic neuropsychological measures with modern neuroelectric brain wave activity, personal cognitive abilities, brain development, brain function performance, and brain systems connections, and then compares these measures against normalized databases to determine brain dysfunction. After the NeuroCodeX evaluation, analysis, and report of findings, PQ began the NeuroCoach BrainChild program which provided computer-based tools to retrain his brain for normalized function and development. Given that PQ presented a variety of neurocognitive and neurodevelopmental issues, participation in the NeuroCoach program accelerated normalization of his brain's development. The 16-week computer-based neuro-cognitive bio-social approach to healing, retrained PQ's brain to facilitate normalization of his functioning and development. The NeuroCodeX program is a proprietary program designed by Dr. Curtis Cripe.

Currently PQ is a six-year-old who has successfully integrated in a comprehensive education Kindergarten program. He continues to receive Falcone therapeutic services that include focus on social emotional development regarding reading and comprehension, pragmatic awareness, social integration, and behavioral management. PQ's current prognosis is very positive as he increasingly demonstrates developmentally appropriate social emotional behaviors and above grade academic skills.

RS 14 year old 9th grade Male

RS entered Falcone's program the summer before his freshman year. His parents sought Falcone's support because RS's tantrums, previously contained in the home, were spilling into his academic environment in his refusal to cooperate behaviorally and academically, especially his verbal disrespect for his teachers. RS also experienced social teasing at school due to his vocal and motor Tourette Syndrome tics. His parents were very concerned because their bright son was being asked to leave the private school that he had attended for many years, due to his inability to maintain emotional control and to complete required academic assignments upon entering high school.

Previously, such emotional outburst and behavioral management issues were solely demonstrated in the home environment and were buffered by his older siblings. Upon entering middle school his older siblings were no longer living at home; consequently, as RS's familial and emotional dynamics changed, his emotional containment system was unavailable. This, combined with his budding adolescence, caused counterproductive behaviors to spill into his academic environment.

Falcone's skill assessment results indicated that RS was cognitively gifted and that he possessed an extensive vocabulary and advanced critical thinking and reasoning abilities. RS's assessment also showed that he was highly anxious and underdeveloped in emotional and somatic awareness and self-regulation, pragmatics, and executive functioning skills, all which exacerbated his Tourette's symptoms. The triage was to keep RS in his current school by supporting school personnel, educating, and supporting the family system for healthier functioning, and educating RS on how to emotionally self-manage and become a less anxious and more verbally appropriate human being. Falcone, parents, and school personnel agreed to allow RS to remain in attendance at his private school on the condition that he attend an intensive Falcone program for a minimum of one year. Falcone, RS's parents, and the school personnel agreed on goals and objectives and maintained communication regarding social emotional behaviors, academic assignments, and follow through. The primary focus was to ensure that RS's social emotional behaviors were appropriate, and academic competency was demonstrated with a minimum of a "C" grade in each class.

RS's developmental program included psychoeducational coaching focused on personal and academic sequential reasoning, organizational management, and frustration tolerance development. Psychological therapeutic methods included intense somatic awareness, social contextual pragmatics, family education, and emotional intelligence methodologies. Therapeutic modalities included, though were not limited to, emotional education and awareness, energy therapy (tapping, sound, movement, BodyTalk), educational kinesiology, cognitive behavior modification with insight, and relaxation with visualization and mindfulness. RS also participated in the NeuroCodeX QEEG mapping analysis procedure and NeruoCoach program which facilitated a decrease in anxiety and Tourette symptoms, while fostering emotional management and resiliency.

Falcone supported RS through high school with periodic “tune up” sessions during college. RS is currently a successful first-year law student.

KA Middle School Female

I first observed KA when she was in the second grade at a Montessori school that allowed her to pursue her natural interests and activities, rather than formally teaching her through a structured, direct instruction methodology and foundational student behavioral methods that foster primary skill acquisition. KA’s Montessori classroom placed an emphasis on hands-on learning and developing real-world skills, but the child decided whether to participate in what was being offered. Though such educational methods are beneficial for many children, KA was not one of those children. Rather than being attentive and responsive to the teacher’s requests, KA would completely ignore the teacher and other students to pursue her own interests such as drawing and wandering around the room or school yard. When the teacher approached KA, she would demonstrate oppositional behavior, becoming verbally loud and disruptive to the teacher and other students, and leave the situation. Though very petite, KA was a very strong-willed child who knew how to manipulate situations to avoid expectations and activities she did not understand or like.

When administering her skill-based assessment it was evident that KA displayed impactful social emotional, behavioral, and academic developmental delays. She was a non-reader unable mathematically to demonstrate understanding of base 10, experienced fine and gross motor developmental delays, and had articulation challenges due to an oral overbite and uneven oral-motor movement. Parents indicated that KA, an only child who as a baby presented failure to thrive symptoms, mostly socialized with her extended family. Though her failure to thrive symptoms were no longer an issue, her parents continued to be very protective and over caring towards KA, due to her initial medical diagnosis, petiteness, and emotional outbursts. Mom and dad could not make emotional demands on KA because her emotional disruptions frightened them. The trauma of KA’s initial medical diagnosis, failure to thrive, and her continued below average weight and height stifled their ability to appropriately parent a strong-willed petite daughter who controlled the household.

Falcone’s initial program interventions began with parent education about behavioral emotional management, social emotional development, communication, and parental stress reduction methods. A request for a SPED psychoeducational assessment that included SLP, OT (occupational therapy) and PT (physical therapy) for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that would permit SPED support at her local public school. Our initial therapeutic sessions with KA were focused on somatic awareness, play and movement therapy, and articulation and language processing

skills. Due to KA's depressed social emotional and academic skills, I strongly advocated for second grade retention, which the public school district policy denied.

KA attended a very intense Falcone summer re-educational program during which she learned the following: how to regulate frustration, demonstrate internal emotional control, increase attention and time on task, coordinate fine and gross movements, develop oral/motor articulation, comprehend and conceptualize language, understand basic mathematical procedures, and increase her attention span. KA entered public school where an astute third-grade teacher understood the early educational skill deprivation KA had experienced and, painstakingly, individualized material, while teaching her other students. KA also received SPED, SLP, OT, and Adaptive Physical Education (APE) services. Falcone teamed with an excellent school SPED team who individualized her program to support KA's overall development. The following year the entire team decided that KA would greatly benefit from repeating third grade. Though such retention is generally not advisable, in this case it was the appropriate developmental solution in light of KA's petiteness, social emotional immaturity, and depressed academic skills.

KA continues with the Falcone program today, receiving support in all seven areas of development. She continues to require support in pragmatics, executive functioning, emotional management, and higher order thinking skills. The most amazing aspect about KA is that after about eight months of attending Falcone's program and receiving public school services, her previous therapist was pleasantly shocked by KA's rapid social emotional and educational transformation. KA also participated in the NeuroCodeX QEEG mapping analysis procedure and NeuroCoach program which helped her increase attention and develop sequential reasoning, language processing, and emotional resiliency. Currently, KA is a seventh grader who demonstrates a passion for learning and loves to read, write, and participate in Dungeons and Dragons.