



# Super Stars Literacy

***Early Literacy is a right worth fighting for.***

# Communicating A Brand

To successfully reach an audience and connect with them in a meaningful way we must communicate our message in a clear and prescribed manner. Super Stars Literacy must have a consistent voice in written and spoken communications and one that reflects the brand's values.

We communicate our brand through the words we choose. Our tone is how we say it.



# What This Means for SSL

Early literacy is an emotional and complex issue; we need to communicate SSL's message directly and honestly. Our tone of voice shapes all of our communications, including speeches, PowerPoint presentations, web, social media, print and email blasts.

This brand tone of voice defines Super Stars Literacy to donors, educators, parents, and the community at large.

Delivering a consistent message across all channels will help:

- Define Super Stars Literacy
- Drive awareness
- Differentiate ourselves from other programs
- Create an emotional connection with our audience
- Celebrate our students' success
- Expand our reach (Increase donations)



# Tone of Voice

The tone of voice should be consistent, regardless of the medium or audience. Our language should be:

- Accessible:** Simple, friendly, conversational, free of jargon, acronyms and overly technical language\*
- Honest:** Clear, concise, trustworthy
- Authoritative:** Credible, transparent
- Positive:** Authentic, passionate, upbeat

\*In communications to school administrators and principals we need to amend this approach to specifically include language that educators feel most comfortable with. In short, school principals need to feel that we “understand them” and including unique language is one way to achieve this.



# General Guidelines

The most effective communications are those that are direct and to the point. Look for the simplest way to say what you want.

We should:

**Write in first person** (*We* when referring to Super Stars Literacy, the organization; *I* when the message is coming from Mike, Erin, Carla, etc.) or second person. We should not write in third person, except for press releases.

**Emphasize Relationships** – When practical emphasize the power of partnerships (“Together, we can...” “With school administrators we...”).

**Be Relevant** – Let the audience understand that they are top of mind. Talk about them at the outset before talking about SSL.

**Be Brief** – Brevity is good.



# General Guidelines

**Use of “Super Stars”** – Use “Super Stars” when referring to students:

“Michael is one of our Super Stars.”

or

“A group of Super Stars visited the Tech Museum recently.”

Volunteers can be referred to as “superstars”:

“Chelsea showed what a superstar she is...”

When referring to the organization:

“Super Stars Literacy”

“SSL”

or

“We”

**Write in the active voice** – Write “Super Stars Literacy serves six schools,” not “Six schools are being served by Super Stars Literacy.”



# General Guidelines

**Calls to Action** – As much as practical, include a call to action in every written or spoken piece. Let readers know what they can do.

“Sponsor a child”

“Volunteer your time”

“Donate now”

**Success stories** – Highlight the successes of Super Stars Literacy. Everyone loves a good story. We have many Super Stars whose stories are powerful and connect on a very emotional level. We want our audience to feel those stories. Share them.

**Be positive** – The challenges of early literacy are many and are substantial. Reinforce the positive, the solutions and the outcomes. Use the doom and gloom of poor literacy only to frame the conversation.

**Keep it casual** – This is a community based group. We should write as if we’re members of the community. Be conversational, use contractions (we’re instead of we are), use the vernacular where appropriate.



# Before and After

Samples of written copy







# Before and After



Super Stars Literacy



We give every child the foundation for lifelong learning and achievement.

April 2011

## In This Issue

- [Lawrence Hall of Science](#)
- [Children's Support League](#)
- [First House Party](#)
- [Youth for Good](#)
- [Student Success Story](#)
- [eBay Giving Works](#)
- [SSL Video](#)



Check out our newest  
SSL VIDEO on  
YouTube!

Produced by Jeremy Fortes,  
and shot at East Oakland  
Pride!

A group of 200 Super Star students and their supportive families journeyed to the Lawrence Berkeley Hall of Science on Saturday, February 19th. Pouring rain didn't stop our students from making the best of the experience. Small groups of students, led by SSL staff and enthusiastic volunteers, explored the new *Creatures of the Abyss* exhibit. Students were encouraged to think about how creatures that live in deep ocean waters exhibit perseverance, a social-emotional theme that we have been discussing in the classroom. After the exhibit, students explored other parts of the museum. The building block room was a huge hit! The was a large room full of Kapla blocks, also known as "pixie planks," that can be used to build stable structures and models. It was incredible to see so many little minds and hands at work. We nearly had to drag our students (and parents and volunteers) out of the building block room in time for lunch.

The staff at the Lawrence Hall of Science graciously offered us a lunch room that could accomodate our big group. We enjoyed healthy and delicious sack lunches prepared by the Junior League of the East Bay.

All in all, the first field trip of the year was a huge success. We appreciate the support we received from the Lawrence Hall of Science, SSL Board Members, volunteers, and Super Stars families. We look forward to our next field trip to the San Jose Tech Museum on April 9th. Super Stars Literacy has taken groups of students to the Tech museum for the past several years, but this will be the first time that we get to see an educational IMAX movie. A new museum grant allows free admission to the IMAX theater for all Oakland schools. Very exciting!

## Before





Super Stars Literacy



April 2011

### In This Issue

[Lawrence Hall of Science](#)

[Children's Support League](#)

[First House Party](#)

[Youth for Good](#)

[Student Success Story](#)

[eBay Giving Works](#)

[SSL Video](#)



Check out our newest  
SSL VIDEO on  
YouTube!

Produced by Jeremy Fortes,  
and shot at East Oakland  
Pride!

Our first field trip of the year was a huge success; 200 Super Stars and their supportive families spent a rainy Saturday afternoon enjoying Lawrence Berkeley Hall of Science. The new exhibit *Creatures of the Abyss* was a huge hit. Students learned about sea life that live on the ocean's bottom and how they exhibit perseverance, a social-emotional theme we've been discussing in the classroom.

Our thanks go out to the staff at the Lawrence Hall of Science, who were gracious and helpful to the extreme; the Junior League of the East Bay, who provided sack lunches for everyone; SSL Board Members; volunteers; and the families of our Super Stars who lend their support every day.

Our next field trip takes us to the South Bay when we visit Tech Museum of Innovation in San Jose on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Among other highlights will be an IMAX movie.

# Before and After

## After

### Why it works

- Shorter, more succinct
- Begins with "Our"
- Use of "Super Stars"





# Before and After



*We give every child the foundation for lifelong learning and achievement.*

## **Volunteer Newsletter April 2011**

## Before

Super Stars Literacy would like to recognize the incredible work of **Chelsea Williams**, a classroom volunteer at East Oakland Pride Elementary. Chelsea has volunteered with the organization since November 2010. She has been a consistent volunteer that the Super Stars at EOP know and love. The staff is impressed by Chelsea's resiliency. She has been at the school during two security lock-downs. Although these events are extremely stressful, Chelsea was calm and helped relieve the anxiety of the students.

Chelsea showed her commitment to Super Stars once again on Cesar Chavez Day when she showed up ready to work in the hot sun to beautify the school. Chelsea worked like a Super Star! When we ran out of cardboard to line the newly built planter boxes, she offered to go to the Oakland Zoo, where she works, to gather boxes. She came back to the school with a car full of cardboard. We were able to finish lining and filling the planter boxes thanks to her resourcefulness.

***Thank you, Chelsea, for your contribution to Super Stars Literacy  
and the entire Oakland community!***





# Before and After



## Volunteer Newsletter April 2011

## After

**Chelsea Williams** has been doing some incredible work at East Oakland Pride Elementary since joining Super Stars in November 2010. Chelsea is calm, cool, and collected even during the most stressful situations; during two security lock-downs she was able to keep the students relaxed and calm.

On Cesar Chavez Day Chelsea showed what a superstar she is. On the hottest day of the month she worked tirelessly to help beautify East Oakland Pride. We ran out of cardboard lining newly built planter boxes. Chelsea drove to where she works, the Oakland Zoo, and loaded up her car with all the cardboard she could find and deliver it back to school in time to finish the planter boxes. Her resourcefulness and resiliency are two reasons why the Super Stars at EOP love Chelsea.

Thank you Chelsea, for your contributions to Super Stars Literacy and the entire Oakland Community.

### Why it works

- More succinct
- Written in 1<sup>st</sup> person
- The last sentence is no longer set off from body of text



# Before and After

## Support a Reading Super Star!

For only **\$15** per day, you can give a child the opportunity and the tools for school success. Please consider sponsoring a child for one week, one month, or the entire school year.

**Before**

## Support a Reading Super Star!

Only \$15 a day gives a young reader the chance to succeed for life. SSL provides 12 hours of literacy instruction per week per child. Sponsor a child for a week, a month, or an entire school year.

**After**

### **Why it works**

3 key points are included: cost, what is provided, and what you can do moving forward.



# 5 Key Messages



# Key Messages

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Key Message 1</b><br><i>The Problem</i> | A student entering kindergarten with poor pre-literacy skills is destined to be at a disadvantage for his or her entire life – <i>unless</i> early intervention occurs.  |
| Expanded key message                       | Measuring basic literacy skills in young schoolchildren is the best predictor of a student's likelihood of graduating high school and college and gauging his or her lifetime earnings potential. A child starting school with low pre-literacy skills, and who has no intervention is likely to begin a cycle of academic failure. Beyond the personal tragedy this also ripples into higher societal costs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Higher crime rates</li><li>- Greater financial burden for social services</li><li>- Loss of productivity due to limited earning potential</li></ul>  |
| Support points                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Children who struggle with basic literacy are 10 times more likely to drop out of school</li><li>- Rates of reading proficiency are directly tied to crime rates</li><li>- California plans for future prison occupancy according to the number of children who cannot read at grade level by fourth grade.</li><li>- High school dropouts are three times more likely to be arrested and eight times as likely to go to jail or prison as high school graduates</li><li>- Dropouts earn substantially less money and are relegated to unskilled labor jobs</li><li>- Only 2% of students with unaddressed early reading problems ever graduate with a 4 year college degree</li></ul> |

# Key Messages

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Key Message 2</b><br/><i>Who we are</i></p> | <p>Super Stars Literacy (SSL) believes that <b>early literacy is a right worth fighting for</b>. We are a group of dedicated and committed community members and educators working to improve the reading and behavioral skills of young, at-risk students.</p>  |
| <p>Expanded key message</p>                       | <p>Super Stars Literacy began in 2002 when a group of committed women from the Junior League of Oakland-East Bay, Inc. (JLOEB) began a program to boost early literacy and social and behavioral development for low-performing kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students. Since then Super Stars Literacy has been promoting and improving literacy skills of young, at-risk students in six Oakland schools, with the hope of expanding to more schools in the future.</p>                      |
| <p>Support points</p>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Mike Mowery brings his experience from a long law career and extensive work with non-profits to his role as Executive Director.</li><li>- Erin Drake, Program Director, has a Master's Degree in Education from UCLA and a deep firsthand understanding of teaching in an underserved community.</li><li>- Rose Lyn Abesamis-Bell, Training Director, holds a Master of Arts Education from Claremont University and has 9 years of teaching experience.</li></ul> |



# Key Messages

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Key Message 3</b><br/><i>What we do.</i></p> | <p>We provide at-risk K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students the tools for lifelong learning and achievement. Super Stars Literacy provides sustained and comprehensive literacy instruction for at-risk students so they may reach grade-appropriate reading levels by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.</p>   |
| <p>Expanded key message</p>                        | <p>Super Stars Literacy follows a highly structured program, offering students 12 hours a week of intense, after school instruction led by professional educators and highly trained volunteers. Instructors (known as Group Leaders) are recruited through AmeriCorps' national service program. Group Leaders work closely with students' teachers and parents to tailor learning to the individual student.</p> <p>We work in Title I elementary schools in Oakland Unified School District with students from some of the region's poorest and most underserved areas, and which have the highest crime rates. SSL also involves parents to help align school and home influences in support of students' academic and social-emotional gains.</p> <p>Unlike other literacy programs, which rely on tutor-assisted reading for 1 or 2 hours each week Super Stars Literacy produces predictable and significant results.</p> <p>Our goal is that at the end of each program year 80% of our Super Stars will improve by one level in literacy skills, as measured by the Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment tool.</p> <p>At the end of the third year in the program our goal is that 80% of our 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Super Stars will be reading at grade level.</p> |
| <p>Support points</p>                              | <p>Super Stars Literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involves students for 12 hours per week</li> <li>• Coordinates with students' teachers and curriculum</li> <li>• Focuses on specific literacy skills</li> <li>• Involves students' families</li> <li>• Address social-behavioral skills</li> </ul>   |

# Key Messages

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Key Message 4<br/><b><i>Why should I care?</i></b></p> | <p>You can make a big difference in the lives of young students with only a small investment of your time or money.</p>   |
| <p>Expanded key message</p>                               | <p>We give every child the foundation for lifelong learning and achievement. A modest investment today can change the trajectory of a student's academic life forever. The most formative time in a student's learning are the first three years of school. Poor literacy skills from K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grades place students at a serious disadvantage for the rest of their school years, a handicap that many learners never recover from.</p> <p>For only \$15 a day, per student SSL provides 12 hours of literacy instruction per week, per child. This type of specialized and targeted instruction can and does raise the literacy skills of at-risk students so by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade they're reading at grade level.</p> <p>A \$5400 investment for three years of SSL literacy instruction per student is a bargain, when you consider that high school dropouts costs the state of California \$392,000.</p> |
| <p>Support points</p>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Three years of SSL literacy instruction is only \$5400 per student</li><li>- High school dropouts pay fewer taxes and are more likely to collect welfare and unemployment benefits</li><li>- Each dropout costs the state of California \$392,000</li></ul>   |

## Key Messages

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Key Message 5<br/><b><i>What can I do?</i></b></p> | <p>Super Stars Literacy needs your help. Because we are a community-based organization we rely on members of the community for their time, services, and financial assistance.</p>  |
| <p>Expanded key message</p>                           | <p>We draw on the resources of the community in which we live to serve the children who need us most. Your donation today makes a huge contribution toward helping students in our community learn the essential skills and literacy they need to realize their full potential.</p> <p>Super Stars Literacy is staffed by professionals and professionals-in-training but we also need volunteers who can spend time in the classroom or help out in a variety of capacities.</p> |
| <p>Support points</p>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A donation of any size makes a substantial difference in the lives of children</li><li>- You <i>can</i> make a difference</li></ul>   |