



Super Stars Literacy

Super Stars Literacy Announces Approval of 501(c)(3) Status
Award-Winning Early Literacy Program Triples in Size, Adds Experienced Leadership For 2008-2009 School Year

OAKLAND, Calif., September 9, 2008 – Following yesterday's worldwide celebrations of literacy on International Literacy Day, Super Stars Literacy (SSL) today announces it has successfully completed the process of establishing itself as an independent nonprofit organization and has received 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the IRS. This new development comes at a time of pivotal change and growth for the award-winning intensive early literacy and social development after-school program. The 2008-2009 school year brings a three-fold increase in the number of students and schools SSL will serve, as well as the addition of a new program director, Erin Drake, responsible for the successful operation of SSL at its six school sites in Oakland, Calif.

Effective July 31, 2008, SSL's 501(c)(3) non-profit status marks its official separation from the Junior League of Oakland East Bay (JLOEB), the organization which founded SSL in 2002 build early literacy skills in primary grade children in communities with limited resources and counter studies showing that there is an almost 90% chance that a child who is a poor reader at the end of first grade will be a poor reader in fourth grade. Without the support of programs like SSL, these children grow to dislike reading and therefore read considerably less than good readers do both in and out of school. Typically, children who enter kindergarten or first grade substantially behind age norms do not make the gains they need in order to leave school with strong academic skills.

Research further suggests that children not reading at grade level by the end of the third grade are at serious risk of never graduating from high school. This is even more likely for children from low socio-economic backgrounds, since low-income children tend to perform below normative standards on school, state and national assessments of reading achievement. For example, in 2005, only 10 percent of fourth grade students from low socio-economic backgrounds in California scored proficient or above in reading. During its six years as a JLOEB project, Super Stars Literacy achieved outstanding results in meeting, and often exceeding, their goal of having 80 percent of SSL students read at grade level as they enter the third grade. As an independent non-profit, SSL will continue to work in support of this mission and goals.

"Super Stars Literacy has had an amazing impact on the literacy ability and social development of the students we serve. Year-after-year, a substantial majority, many times almost 100 percent, of Super Stars students who begin the school year struggling to read, end the year reading at, or approaching, the benchmark level for their grade," notes Super Stars Literacy Executive Director Mike Mowery. "Our research shows positive lasting effects for our students, as well as a profound need for the same sort of change in other underserved communities throughout Oakland and the East Bay. As an independent organization, our goal is to double in size and provide Super Stars Literacy's programming to 12 local schools by 2010."

Starting Sept. 15, 2008, the newly independent SSL will provide its early literacy after-school program to 270 kindergarten through second grade students at six Oakland elementary schools: original school sites Hoover Elementary and Parker Elementary, and new sites Think College Now, International Community School, EnCompass Academy and East Oakland Pride. Due to the three-fold increase from the 90 students SSL served at two school sites during the previous school year, the program will also nearly triple its dedicated program staff from 11 to 29 in order to maintain its low instructor to student ratio, integral to successfully building the literacy skills and emotional resiliency of Super Stars' students.

New Program Director Erin Drake will oversee the successful execution of Super Stars Literacy curriculum at its six school sites. She brings extensive knowledge of the needs of students and schools in underserved areas to this role. A Teach for America alumna, Drake continued working at Budlong Elementary School in South Los Angeles after completing her service year there. She spent a total of three years in this school teaching kindergarten and first grade. She also served on the school's leadership council, earning valuable planning skills she will exercise in leading the growing SSL staff and implementing and further formalizing the SSL program.