**SEED Grammar Style Guide**

**Style**

* SEED uses the active voice. “The dog bit the boy.” Not “The boy was bitten by the dog.”
* SEED uses a professional, approachable, informal voice (exceptions include formal proposals or white papers). Please see the SEED website for an appropriate tone.
* SEED uses clear, concise sentences.
* We speak in first person. “We open schools.”
* SEED uses our brand messages in every written document.

**Naming**

* When writing the full name of the Foundation or School, capitalize “The.” When not using the full name of The SEED Foundation or The SEED School, write “the School” or “the Foundation.”
* Always capitalize “The” in “The SEED Foundation.”
* SEED simply uses the acronym “SEED” and never spells out a meaning for the letters   
  S-E-E-D.
* When discussing the SEED model (as opposed to The SEED School of Washington, D.C.) there is no need to capitalize the “s” in school. For example, There has been renewed interest in a SEED school in California.
* Even though the official name of SEED DC is The SEED Public Charter School of Washington, D.C., we usually omit the words “Public Charter,” although this isn’t mandatory (especially for recruiting purposes for the school). The names of the schools are “The SEED School of Washington, D.C.” and “The SEED School of Maryland.” “SEED DC” and “SEED MD” can be used in more informal situations and when abbreviations are appropriate.

**Preferable Commonly Used Words**

* Poor – Use “underserved”
* Poverty – Use “low-income”
* Inner-city – Use “urban”
* Residential – Use “boarding”
* Youth – Use “students”
* Alumni – Use “graduates”

**Grammar**

***Commonly Used Terms to Describe Our Model***

* Hyphenate “college-preparatory,” when it is used as an adjective. For example, “SEED opens urban, college-preparatory, public boarding schools.”
* Do not capitalize nation. For example, “The SEED Foundation has opened the nation’s only urban, college-preparatory, public boarding schools.”
* Do not capitalize “southeast” in “southeast D.C.”
* Do not capitalize “middle school” or “upper school.”
* Use periods in “D.C.”

***Academic Programs***

* In general, we do not capitalize the names of programs. For example, “We request funding for the School’s enrichment program.”
* However, capitalize names of programs when they are used in full. For example, “The Department of Economics has invited Raj Vinnakota to be a keynote speaker” or “The economics department at Harvard asked Raj to be a keynote speaker.”
* Do not capitalize majors or academic disciplines unless they refer to a language, ethnic group, or geographical entity. For example, “John Williams is an economics major, but loves his courses in English, French, and psychology.”

***Academic Degrees***

* Use periods after each initial in degrees. For example, “M.B.A.” and “B.A.”
* Use an apostrophe in “master’s” or “bachelor’s degree.”
* Capitalize letters of acronyms, but do not capitalize them spelled out. For example, “M.A.” and “master of arts.”
* B.A. – bachelor’s degree, bachelor of arts degree
* B.S. – bachelor of science degree
* Ed.D. – doctor of education
* J.D. – juris doctor
* M.A. – master’s degree, master of arts degree, or a master’s
* M.B.A. – master of business administration
* M.F.A. – master of fine arts
* M.S. – master’s degree, master of science degree or a master’s
* Ph.D. - doctorate

***Alumni***

* Alumna – singular, female
* Alumnae – plural, females only
* Alumni – plural, men only or men and women
* Alumnus – singular, male
* Alum – singular, male or female, only appropriate informally
* Alums – plural, male or female, only appropriate informally

***Board of Directors/Trustees***

* Capitalize “board of directors” when it is part of a proper name. For example, “The SEED Foundation Board of Directors will meet on March 11.”
* Lowercase “board of directors” when it is used alone. For example, “The board of directors will meet at Danaher.”
* Follow title rules below for naming members of the board.

***Government***

* Do not capitalize “federal government.”
* Do not capitalize words such as city, state, federal, and national when they are used as modifiers. For example, “There are federal regulations about the relationship of city and state governments.” Do not capitalize, “the county of Baltimore.” Capitalize “Baltimore County.”

***Titles***

* Do not capitalize titleswhen set off by commas. For example, “SEED’s head of school, Charles B. Adams, has been with the school since 2007.” Or “Both of The SEED Foundation’s founders, Eric Adler and Raj Vinnakota, are trustees of the school.”
* Do not capitalize titles when they appear after names. For example, “Charles B. Adams, head of school, has been with SEED since 2007.”
* Capitalize titles when they appear as part of a person’s name, usually before the name. For example, “Head of School Charles B. Adams has been with the school since 2007.”

***General Grammar and Punctuation***

* Always spell out **percent**; only use the % symbol on charts and graphs.
* Spell out numbers **one through ten**. Use numerals for 11 and above.
* In a series of items, **use a comma** before “and…” For example, “The School received funding from Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Annie Casey.”
* Use “**more than**” instead of “**over**” for amounts that can be counted. For example, “More than 320 students attend The SEED School of Washington, D.C.”
* Use **“less”** when you are talking about things that refer to general quantities. Use “**fewer**” when you are talking about things that can be counted.
* Use “**which**” plus commas instead of “**that**” to set off nonrestrictive (unnecessary) clauses.
* “**Impact**” is not a verb unless it’s used to mean “to strike forcefully.” It does not mean “to affect” or “to influence.” For example, it is incorrect to say: “This impacts the team.” It should say: “This affects the team.” You can “have an impact on something.”
* “**Affect**” means “to influence,” “to cause.” ‘**Effect**” is used to describe the “result.” For example, “The legislation will affect our ability to build a SEED school.” “The effect was great.”
* Do not capitalize “**seasons.**”
* Capitalize commonly accepted designations for **geographical areas**, for example: “the West Coast” or “the Bay Area.” Less official titles or directions are not capitalized. For example, “He moved south to south Florida.”
* When you list examples, use “e.g” (It means “for example”).
* When you explain something, use “i.e.” (It means “in essence.”)
* Use “**among**” when referring to more than two people or things. Use “**between**” when referring to only two people or things.
* Do not use hyphens at the end of lines in online or printed marketing collateral.
* Capitalize only the first letter of the word of the valediction. For example, “With warmest regards,” not “With Warmest Regards.”
* “**Web site**” is two words. “**Email**” is one word, no hyphen.

For a comprehensive grammar style guide, please see the fourth edition of *Strunk and White*.