

For Immediate Release – September 2014

U.S. Department of Education funds local company to help struggling readers

Foundations in Learning (FIL), the University of Iowa’s Department of Psychology and DeLTA Center, and the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) at Florida State University will collaborate to bring the science of reading to the classroom through a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant awarded by the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) and the U.S. Department of Education.

Drs. Carolyn Brown and Jerry Zimmermann, FIL’s founders and adjunct professors at the University of Iowa’s Department of Communication Science, announced the \$150,000 Phase I award to develop and test a much needed tool to assess reading skills of struggling readers in middle school. Dr. Brown said, “We couldn’t be more excited about the award and the incredible team we have put together to help solve a most important problem. This tool will help identify foundational deficits in the knowledge and skills of persistently struggling readers in middle schools across the country.” She continued, “We are particularly pleased with the partners and scientists we have engaged who are vital to this work.” Drs. Bob McMurray and Eliot Hazeltine from the University of Iowa’s Department of Psychology and DeLTA Center and Dr. Deborah Reed from FCRR will serve critical roles on this project.

IES received over 250 proposals for this round of SBIR awards. Brown and Zimmermann and their team were one of only 12 awarded. Zimmermann stated that the support provided by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) to develop and test an early model “played a critical role in making FIL’s proposal competitive”. The awarding of the SBIR to an Iowa company comes at an important time for the state. Debi Durham, the Director of the IEDA said, “Supporting efforts to bring SBIR money into the state is a high priority for us and is consistent with our goal of accelerating public/private partnerships.”

Dan Reed, Vice President for Research and Economic Development at the University of Iowa, applauded the award saying, “This is a wonderful development of a team that has worked hard to bring the science of learning to the classroom. I trust this will benefit the students of Iowa and young readers across the nation.” Barbara Foorman, the Director of the FCRR and leading national expert on literacy, said, “We are pleased to be involved in this innovative and thoughtful research with such potential for helping to solve one of our most persistent and important problems. Deborah Reed will be a great team member for this research.”

Foundations in Learning develops applications, driven by effective learning principles, to optimize student learning. The organization’s flagship application, Access Code, has proven to enhance fluency and comprehension of students with varying abilities by improving fundamental skills. The application draws on years of research from the science of learning. Access Code’s web-based delivery allows it to be tailored to each learner and makes it easy to implement. For more information, phone 888-701-3009 or visit www.foundations-learning.com.

The DeLTA Center is an interdisciplinary research group composed of basic and applied scientists, with a shared interest in development and learning. Its 43 faculty members represent ten departments on the University of Iowa campus, as well as 33 graduate members and 42 non-UI affiliate members from universities worldwide.

Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) is a multidisciplinary research center at Florida State University that was established in 2002 by the Governor's Office and state legislature. Currently, FCRR is home to nine tenured and tenure-track faculty members holding joint appointments with the College of Arts and Sciences or College of Education. The center supports 17 federal research contracts and grants with a staff of over 550, including post-doctoral fellows, senior research associates, graduate research assistants (GRAs), and undergraduate students. See www.fcrr.org for more information.

For more information, please contact:

Jason Smith

jsmith@foundations-learning.com

319-333-7788 ext. 100

Foundations in Learning
201 South Clinton St., Suite 200
Iowa City, Iowa 52240
www.foundations-learning.com