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Iowa Reading Research Center

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Foundations in Learning, Iowa Reading Research Center, and Wyoming Department of Education Partner for U.S. Department of Education EIR Grant

The five-year, \$9.99-million grant will focus on increasing reading fluency outcomes for struggling readers in Grades 3-5 across rural Wyoming, Iowa, and other states

Iowa City, Iowa, January 27, 2026 — In partnership with Foundations in Learning and the Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC), the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) was awarded a five-year, \$9.99-million Education Innovation and Research (EIR) grant from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) as part of its push to improve literacy nationwide.

Per the ED, “Every dollar from this year’s EIR awards will support the use and expansion of evidence-based literacy instruction, expand education choice, and empower grant recipients to build and sustain high-quality literacy support systems for students.”

Through “Project Skyword Literacy: Lifting Decoding and Fluency through Data-Guided Practice,” the grant aims to scale proven models, featuring Foundations in Learning’s WordFlight™ reading intervention solution along with implementation and coaching support from the IRRC, and evaluation by the Center for Evaluation and Assessment, both at the University of Iowa, to provide better access to reading solutions for rural students in Grades 3-5.

Foundations in Learning’s [WordFlight™ literacy intervention solution](#) is proven to deliver meaningful improvements in student outcomes. Aligned with the science of reading and based in the science of learning, WordFlight bridges the gap between phonics and fluency to move 85 percent of struggling students to proficiency in foundational reading skills in one school year.

“This grant allows us to provide WordFlight to students who need personalized intervention to support their foundations for reading fluency, while testing and expanding models for educators on the ground to sustainably support high-impact interventions. This will allow us to serve more students, especially in rural districts and those with fewer resources,” said Allison Zimmermann, CEO of Foundations in Learning. “We could not have asked for better partners to bring these ideas to fruition and build towards our vision to make literacy accessible for all by leveraging the science of learning.”

The on-site assessment procedures and data collection in schools will be conducted by the IRRC. The project evaluation will be conducted by the University of Iowa Center for Evaluation and Assessment.

“This project provides an opportunity to examine evidence-based practices across schools in Iowa, Wyoming, and other states,” said Seth King, associate professor of special education at the University of Iowa and an IRRC Research Fellow. “The findings will provide useful guidance for supporting students who struggle with foundational reading skills.”

About the Iowa Reading Research Center

The Iowa Reading Research Center is a research and service unit in the University of Iowa College of Education dedicated to improving literacy outcomes for children and adolescents. The center conducts and disseminates research on evidence-based literacy instruction and intervention, provides professional learning and technical assistance to educators and schools, and develops tools and resources to support effective reading and writing instruction. Its work

focuses on translating high-quality research into practical guidance that can be used by teachers, schools, and education agencies to strengthen literacy outcomes statewide and beyond.

About the University of Iowa Center for Evaluation and Assessment

The University of Iowa Center for Evaluation and Assessment is an interdisciplinary research unit in the University of Iowa College of Education that provides evaluation, measurement, and analytic support for education and social science initiatives. The center specializes in the design and implementation of rigorous evaluations, including randomized controlled trials and quasi-experimental studies, as well as advanced statistical modeling, cost and cost-effectiveness analyses, and data management. CEA works with researchers, schools, districts, and state agencies to generate credible evidence that informs practice, policy, and large-scale program improvement.

About WordFlight™ from Foundations in Learning

WordFlight™ is the first patented literacy assessment and intervention for grades 3-8 that bridges the gap between phonics and fluency. Created by researchers and program developers with decades of experience in providing schools with effective programs to meet the individual needs of students, the online program is a proven and research-based solution that blends the best of the science of reading and the science of learning to help develop fluent readers. WordFlight is a registered trademark of Foundations in Learning, a learning company based in Coralville, Iowa. To learn more, visit www.wordflight.com.

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