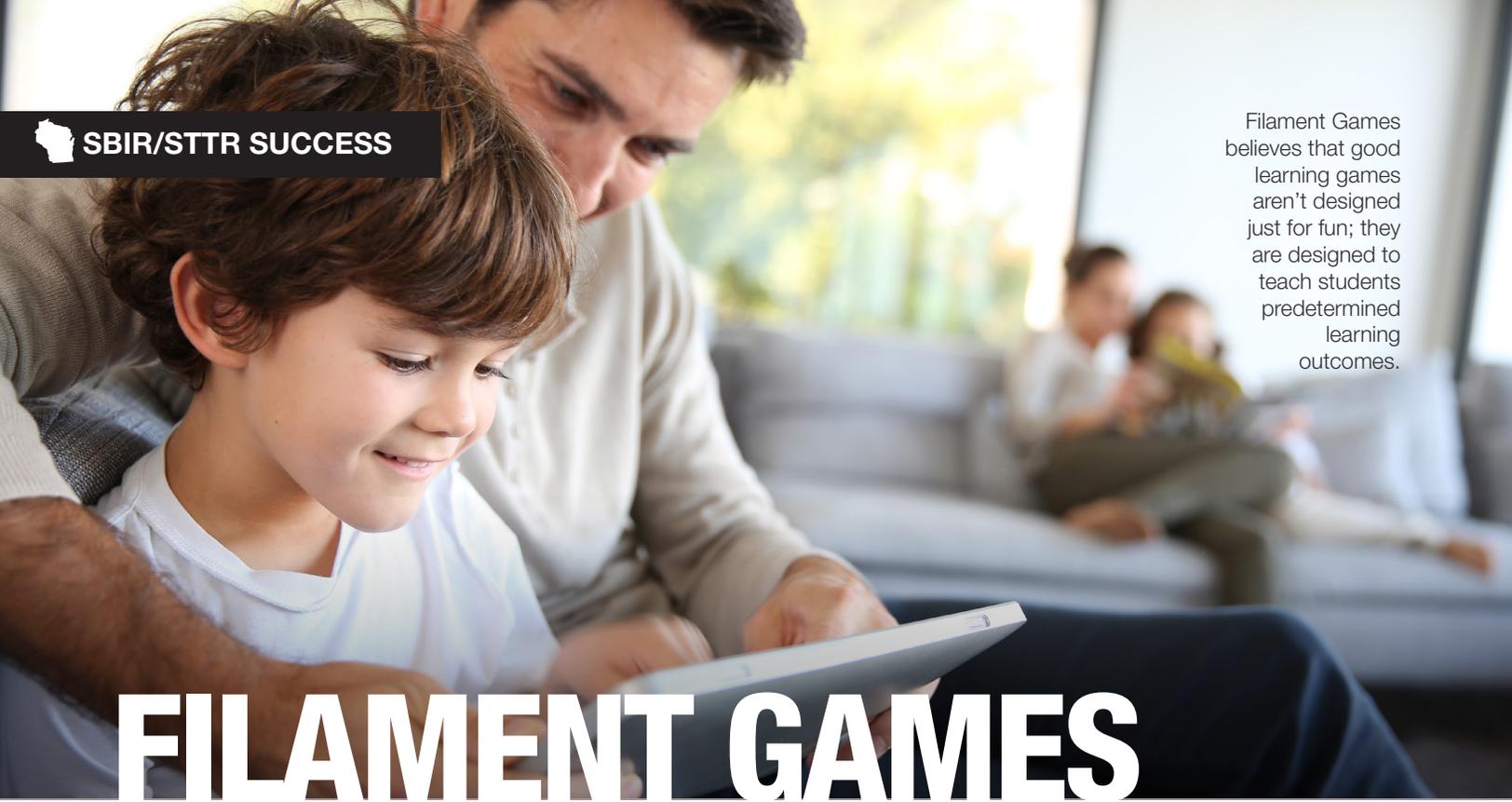


Filament Games believes that good learning games aren't designed just for fun; they are designed to teach students predetermined learning outcomes.



# FILAMENT GAMES

Each year as students head back to school, teachers and administrators look for new ways to make learning fun and keep students engaged. Today, incorporating elements of gaming and play into the curriculum is seen as an important way for educators and parents to inspire, engage, and educate. Drawing upon his background in gaming and education, Dan White, Founder and Chief Product Officer at Filament Games, recognized the potential to make a meaningful impact in this growing market.

#### PHASE III SUCCESS

Over 40,000 paid downloads of the company's games with millions of plays in an out of schools

#### AGENCIES

ED, NSF

#### SNAPSHOT

Filament Games is at the forefront of game-based learning with its engaging STEM learning tools, games, and lesson plans.

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"At the beginning, we were making games on contract for other organizations, but we wanted to make our own games for school. Games can be a powerful tool for teaching, they should be in every school's tool belt, so we started to explore that area and started to formulate our own games," said White of the company's start. Today, Filament Games creates digital learning games and interactives designed to deliver best-in-class teaching solutions that foster 21st-century skills through experiential learning. The company believes that games are a powerful way to engage and inspire learners, and approach game design by translating learning objectives directly into meaningful gameplay mechanics and playful curriculum materials. To date, there have been 31,000,000 plays of its games.

"We would like to see there be a thriving market for learning games and game-based learning - we're not there yet, but there is definitely an increasing interest in developing 21st century skills in today's students," said White. "We have been able to gain traction by focusing regionally, which is a new approach. We've scaled back from focusing nationally and that has proven more effective." In addition to gaining traction among educators, the company has received several awards, which further validate the company's success and make the challenges even more worthwhile.

"This is really hard, but very interesting work, we're privileged to be able to be challenged and to improve education. We have to develop solutions that work in the trenches, not just idealistic scenarios and take the pressures teachers face into account. It's an interesting challenge to invent solutions in partnership with the people you're trying to serve while not bucking what's there entirely," said White. "The key is being willing to iterate and find the right market fit. There tends to be two types of start-ups - the ones that innovate in an established market and the start-ups trying to create something entirely new and hoping a

market emerges. Learning games are a new market, and you have to out compete the existing model through lower cost, better quality and you have to be willing to change to meet these needs. It's a very fine balance."

In addition to finding success through a regional marketing and development approach, Filament Games is able to take advantage of Madison, Wisconsin's burgeoning tech hub. Given that it is a developing scene, Filament Games sees it as an opportunity to build something new and different. The area has proven to be a willing and open market for learning games and the schools have proven to be a diverse and progressive resource willing to try new ideas. The company's products have been tested for efficacy by a variety of groups ranging from high schools and universities to independent groups. The company's products are being sold directly from the company's website, promoted through social media and participation in industry events, and are also being sold via channel partners including BrainPop, Edmodo, Learning.com, Florida Virtual School, and Carolina Biological which have a significant, established customer bases.



Filament Games products are used in classrooms across the country.

Filament Games has been successful working through the SBIR program and drawn upon Dan White's experience with the NSF SBIR program during his time at Cornell. When comparing venture capital money for start-ups to SBIR funding the company found that with SBIR funding not having to give up equity was a major advantage. While the company was very successful and pleased with the SBIR program it experienced a learning curve since receiving its first award in 2010. The company has gone on to receive 7 SBIR awards to date.

"SBIR gave us a way to experiment with very new products and a new industry, we got to try new things with less financial worry. SBIR got us to point where we could understand market viability for learning games and answer questions," said White. "However, SBIR is not just free money, it is a real investment of your time. You really have to believe in your product and do your due diligence first and plan out how you will approach the proposal process and the program." Now that the company has achieved commercial success with thousands of downloads and uses, White feels able to provide guidance for companies just starting out with the SBIR program officers as they are a valuable resource for small businesses.