

FYI- Summer Literacy Convening

Background:

CTAC funded 22 summer camps in FY25, offering a range of programming including art, theatre, STEM, and swimming. While literacy programming was not a requirement, eight of the funded camps indicated in their proposals that they planned to incorporate literacy skill-building activities. At the end of the summer, CTAC staff sent all 22 camp providers a survey focused on literacy. We asked those eight camp providers specifically to complete it and requested completion from any other camp providers who implemented literacy activities. 12 of 22 camp leaders completed the survey. The purpose of the survey was to help us better understand what literacy programming looked like in CTAC camps this past summer, potential outcomes for students, and what practices could be continued or expanded in the future to further support campers' literacy skill development.

Provider survey responses outlined outcomes that were somewhat anecdotal but promising, including camper growth in literacy skills and in enjoyment of reading. Several providers relied on observations of the improvement in student attitudes and willingness to engage in literacy behaviors over the course of the summer, in addition to more formal evaluation tools.

The survey responses informed CTAC next steps which included organizing a space for providers to share best practices, offering strategies to increase impact, and providing support in utilizing standardized tools to evaluate impact. We planned our Summer Literacy Convening to support these goals.

Convening:

CTAC staff hosted the Summer Literacy Convening virtually on April 17th, 2026, from 10AM to 1PM. The convening included presentations by seven local literacy experts from four different organizations. Dr. Theresa Beachy and Dr. Heidi Keegan presented on the Alachua County Reads Initiative. Heather Harbour (Principal on Special Assignment (Literacy)), Kelly McCluney (Director of Curriculum), and Dr. Amanda Shirk (UFLI¹) represented the Alachua County School District. They discussed student literacy needs and how to align programming with ACPS literacy curriculum. Dr. Coleman-King from Alliance for Scholars discussed how to implement impactful summer literacy programming, and Dr. Meg Lietzau from UF CARD discussed how to support students with special needs in literacy programming. CTAC staff shared practical evaluation tools that can be utilized in a summer camp context to more formally assess student literacy skill building and attitudes toward reading.

Thirteen summer camp providers attended the convening. The virtual nature of the convening allowed flexibility in providers joining when they were able. Providers took advantage of opportunities to ask questions of the speakers and left with over a dozen resources,

¹ University of Florida Literacy Institute developed curriculum, currently used in Alachua County public schools

including a UFLI game generator, websites with free books, and lots of activity ideas. CTAC provided links to the shared resources on a collaborative webpage, available to all summer camp providers.

CTAC Summer Literacy Convening Agenda April 17th, 2026		
Time	Presentation	Speaker
10-10:15	Welcome	Belita James, CTAC
10:15- 10:30	Data Review: Literacy in Summer Camps FY25	Dr. Amy Wagner, CTAC
10:30-11:00	Alachua County Reads: Overview and Activity	Dr. Theresa Beachy and Dr. Heidi Keegan, Center for Nonprofit Excellence
11:00-11:30	What literacy support students need most right now	Heather Harbour and ACPS Literacy Team
11:30-11:40	Break	
11:40-12:10	Strategies for Impactful Summer Literacy Programming	Dr. Coleman-King, Alliance for Scholars
12:10-12:30	Supporting students with special needs in summer literacy programming	Dr. Meg Lietzau, UF CARD (Center for Autism and Related Disabilities)
12:30-1:00	Putting it all together: Implementing and evaluating literacy programming at your camp	Dr. Amy Wagner, CTAC

Next Steps:

Dr. Heidi Keegan of the Alachua County Reads Initiative is reaching out to all CTAC-funded summer camps to provide follow-up support and resources for implementing high-quality, meaningful literacy programming.

CTAC staff will continue to provide support to camp leaders throughout the summer, including guidance in evaluating initiatives and camper progress. CTAC will also provide ongoing opportunities for camp leaders to connect with and learn from one another, reflect on successes, identify lessons learned, and engage in continuous improvement for future programming.