



2025

BRIGHT MINDS BRIGHT SUMMERS

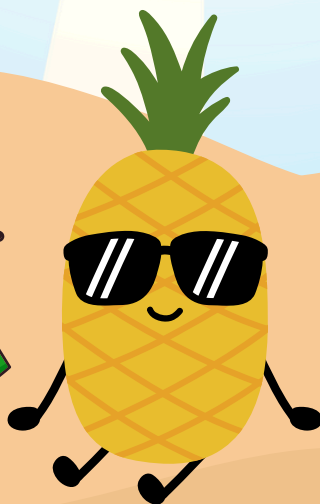
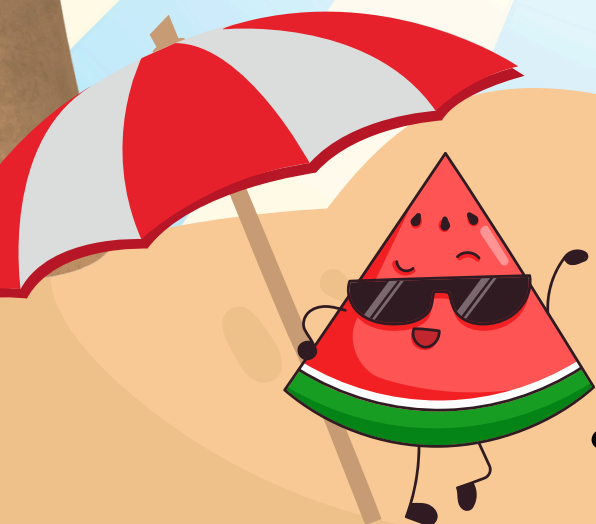
SUMMER LEARNING AND RESOURCE GUIDE

Alachua County
Public Schools

ENDLESS

SUMMER

ADVENTURES



Bright Minds, Bright Summers

Alachua County Public Schools

Summer Learning and Resource Guide

Welcome, Families of Alachua County!

Reading regularly over the summer is one of the best ways to prevent learning loss and help students grow as thinkers and communicators. Books open doors to new worlds, ideas, and experiences—and they help students build vocabulary, improve comprehension, and strengthen focus.

Helpful Questions to Ask After Reading:

- What was your favorite part of the story and why?
- Which character did you relate to the most?
- What problem did the characters face, and how was it solved?
- Would you change anything about the story? Why or why not?
- What lesson do you think the author wanted you to learn?

Use these questions to spark conversations and help your child think more deeply about what they've read!

School may be out for summer, but it's a season for Bright Minds, Bright Summers! This guide is packed with ideas, resources, and local fun to help keep your child's brain active and curious all summer long. Whether you're staying home, heading to a park, or exploring a museum, there are plenty of ways to keep learning alive in Alachua County!



Summer Reading by Grade Group



Recommended Reads for Grades K–2

Grades K–2

- *Mr. S: A First Day of School Book* by Monica Arnaldo (SSYRA Jr.) – A humorous look at the first day of school with a surprising teacher twist.
- *Henry, Like Always* by Jenn Bailey (SSYRA Jr.) – Follow Henry as he navigates changes to his comfortable classroom routine.
- *The Napping House* by Audrey and Don Wood – A cozy, cumulative tale full of sleepy characters and gentle humor.
- *Hi! Fly Guy* by Tedd Arnold – A boy and his pet fly show that friendship can come in unexpected forms.
- *Fox and Rabbit Make Believe* by Beth Ferry – Sweet stories of friends who learn there is enough friendship to go around.
- *Rosie Revere, Engineer* by Andrea Beaty – Rosie learns that failure is part of creating and dreaming big.
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles – A powerful true story of a brave girl who helped desegregate schools.
- *The Pigeon Will Ride the Roller Coaster!* by Mo Willems (SSYRA Jr.) – Pigeon's emotional journey to ride a roller coaster is full of giggles and surprises.
- *Don't Eat Bees* by Dev Petty (SSYRA Jr.) – Chip the dog offers hilarious advice (some better than others!) on what not to do.
- *Rick the Rock of Room 214* by Julie Falatko (SSYRA Jr.) – Rick is a rock who wants more out of life than sitting still.
- *Worm and Caterpillar Are Friends* by Kaz Winans (SSYRA Jr.) – A tender story about friendship and accepting change.
- *The Greatest in the World!* by Ben Clanton (SSYRA Jr.) – Narwhal and Jelly hilariously compete to prove who's the best.

Grades K-2 Activities:

Bright Minds, Bright Adventures: Exploring the World of Stories

- **Character Dress-Up Day:** Have students pick a character from any book they read over the summer and dress up as that character. Afterward, they can share a brief presentation about their character and the story, highlighting their favorite moments.
 - **Create a Storybook:** Ask students to create their own storybook, either digitally or by hand. They can draw pictures and write simple sentences to tell their story, focusing on creativity and imagination.
 - **Reading Scavenger Hunt:** Give students a list of things to find in their books, like "Find a character who is brave" or "Find a place that is described in great detail." They can mark off their discoveries and share their findings with the group or family.
 - **Book Bingo:** Create a bingo card with different book genres, such as adventure, mystery, animal story, fantasy, etc. Students can read a book from each genre and cross off the squares to complete the card by the end of the summer.
 - **Make a Story Map:** Ask students to create a simple map based on a story they've read. They can draw the places where key events occurred in the book (like a character's home, a forest, or a school) and then write about each place's significance in the plot.
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Recommended Reads for Grades 3–5

Grades 3–5

- *The Big Sting* by Rachelle Delaney (SSYRA 3–5) – Leo uncovers a family mystery during a summer visit to his grandmother’s bee farm.
- *Bound for Home* by Meika Hashimoto (SSYRA 3–5) – A tale of survival and friendship between a runaway girl and a rescue dog in the Maine wilderness.
- *The Cursed Moon* by Angela Cervantes (SSYRA 3–5) – A spooky ghost story rooted in Mexican legends, perfect for brave young readers.
- *Home Away from Home* by Cynthia Lord (SSYRA 3–5) – Mia adjusts to a summer of change when she visits her grandmother in Maine.
- *Penny Draws a Best Friend* by Sara Shepard (SSYRA 3–5) – Penny navigates the ups and downs of friendship with honesty and humor.
- *The Shelterlings* by Sarah Beth Durst (SSYRA 3–5) – Magical animals in a shelter prove that everyone has something to contribute.
- *The Ultimate Goal: The Good Sports League* by Tommy Greenwald (SSYRA 3–5) – Ben finds fun and friendship in a league where teamwork matters most.
- *When Sea Becomes Sky* by Gillian McDunn (SSYRA 3–5) – A heartfelt story of siblings who fight to preserve a beloved island.
- *The World According to Humphrey* by Betty G. Birney (SSYRA 3–5) – A classroom hamster’s perspective on school, friendship, and fun.
- *As Brave as You* by Jason Reynolds– Two brothers go to live with their grandparents in the country and learn about family history, secrets, and growing up.
- *The One and Only Ivan* by Katherine Applegate – A gorilla reflects on life in captivity and dreams of something better.
- *The Year of Miss Agnes* by Kirkpatrick Hill – A classic story of how a newcomer can transform a close knit community
- *One Wrong Step* by Jennifer Nielsen – A story of courage and survival on the unforgiving Mt. Everest
- *See What You Can Be!* by Diane Heiman – Inspiring tales that introduce kids to a world of career possibilities.
- *The Aquanaut* by Dan Santat (SSYRA 3–5) – A mysterious sea creature brings adventure and healing to a grieving family.
- *Finally Seen* by Kelly Yang (SSYRA 3–5) – Lina discovers her voice and identity after moving to the U.S. from China.
- *Manatee Summer* by Evan Griffith (SSYRA 3–5) – Peter tries to save a manatee while dealing with changes at home and with friends.
- *Mia Mayhem vs. the Super Bully* by Kara West (SSYRA 3–5) – Mia uses her superhero training to handle a playground bully.
- *Treasure in the Lake* by Jason Pamment (SSYRA 3–5) – Two friends find a hidden city that changes their friendship forever.

Grades 3–5 Activities:

Bright Minds, Bright Journeys: A Summer of Reading and Discovery

- **Reading Buddy Program:** Pair up students with a younger or older student and have them read a book together. After reading, they can share their favorite parts, discuss the story's themes, and draw pictures to represent scenes from the book.
 - **Book Review Videos:** Have students create short, fun book review videos where they talk about the plot, characters, and their opinion of the book. They can use props, costumes, or digital tools to make their reviews engaging.
 - **Create a New Ending:** Encourage students to come up with an alternate ending to any book they've read over the summer. They can write it down or perform it as a short skit with friends or family.
 - **Make a Collage of Favorite Book Scenes:** Students can gather magazines, old books, or printouts and create a collage of images and words that represent scenes, characters, or themes from books they've read.
 - **Write a Letter to a Character:** Have students write a letter to a character from a book they read, asking questions or offering advice. They can share their letters with others in the class or even write a "response" from the character.
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Recommended Reads for Grades 6–8

Grades 6–8

- *Fake* by Ele Fountain (SSYRA 6–8) – A boy living in poverty fakes his way into a better life, but truth catches up.
- *Falling Short* by Ernesto Cisneros (SSYRA 6–8) – Two best friends tackle middle school challenges, basketball, and finding their place.
- *Hear Me* by Kerry O'Malley Cerra (SSYRA 6–8) – A hearing-impaired girl struggles to be understood in a hearing world.
- *How to Stay Invisible* by Maggie C. Rudd (SSYRA 6–8) – A boy hides out in a state park after running away from foster care.
- *The Mystery of the Radcliffe Riddle* by Taryn Souders (SSYRA 6–8) – A scavenger hunt leads to friendship and family secrets.
- *New Dragon City* by Mari Mancusi (SSYRA 6–8) – In a world ruled by dragons, a boy dreams of rebellion and survival.
- *Ride On* by Faith Erin Hicks (SSYRA 6–8) – A quiet graphic novel about horse riding, new friendships, and finding your place.
- *The Secret Battle of Evan Pao* by Wendy Wan-Long Shang (SSYRA 6–8) – A Chinese-American boy faces prejudice while uncovering Civil War history.
- *The Superteacher Project* by Gordon Korman (SSYRA 6–8) – When a robot teacher arrives at school, students learn what it means to be human.
- *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan – A modern-day teen discovers he's the son of a Greek god.
- *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson – A memoir in verse about growing up as a young Black girl in the 1960s and 70s.
- *Scat* by Carl Hiaasen – A humorous mystery set in the Florida wilderness involving a missing teacher and endangered animals.
- *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park – Two children in Sudan struggle for survival, based on a true story.
- *Adrift* by Tanya Guerrero (SSYRA 6–8) – Two teens from different backgrounds must work together to survive on a deserted island after a shipwreck.
- *The Girl in White* by Lindsay Currie (SSYRA 6–8) – A girl investigates a haunting legend in her small town and uncovers a chilling truth.
- *Over and Out* by Jenni Walsh (SSYRA 6–8) – A gripping Cold War tale about a brave girl's plan to escape from East Berlin with her family.
- *Roll for Initiative* by Jaime Formato (SSYRA 6–8) – A quiet teen finds courage and connection through a Dungeons & Dragons campaign.
- *Kelcie Murphy and the Academy for the Unbreakable Arts* by Erika Lewis (SSYRA 6–8) – A girl discovers her magical heritage at a Celtic-inspired school while fighting dark forces.

Grades 6–8 Activities:

Bright Minds, Bright Futures: Unlocking the Power of Books

- **Genre Exploration Challenge:** Students can pick a genre they haven't read much of (e.g., fantasy, historical fiction, or mystery) and read at least one book from that genre. They can then write or present a brief review about what they liked or disliked and how the genre compares to others they've read.
 - **Create a Book Soundtrack:** Have students select songs that would match the mood or themes of a book they read. They can compile a playlist and explain why each song is connected to certain parts of the story.
 - **Design a Book Cover:** After reading a book, students can design their own book cover. They should include elements that represent the main themes, characters, or scenes and explain their design choices.
 - **Write a Dialogue:** Ask students to write a dialogue between two characters from any book they've read. They can imagine a conversation that never took place in the book but would reveal important information about the characters.
 - **Make a "What Happens Next?" Board Game:** Students can create a board game based on the events of any book they read. They will design the game board, create rules, and write cards with "what happens next?" scenarios based on the book's plot.
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Recommended Reads for Grades 9–12

Grades 9–12

- *Accountable* by Dashka Slater (Florida Teens Read) – A real-life story of a racist social media post and its impact on a community.
- *The Davenports* by Krystal Marquis (Florida Teens Read) – Set in 1910s Chicago, a wealthy Black family navigates love, freedom, and societal expectations.
- *The Getaway* by Lamar Giles (Florida Teens Read) – In a dystopian resort, a teen uncovers a disturbing conspiracy while trying to survive.
- *Hollow Fires* by Samira Ahmed (Florida Teens Read) – A gripping mystery where a Muslim teen journalist seeks justice after a tragic crime.
- *A Million to One* by Adiba Jaigirdar (Florida Teens Read) – Four girls attempt a high-stakes heist aboard the Titanic.
- *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers – A teen on trial reflects on his life through a screenplay-style narrative.
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel – A powerful Holocaust memoir depicting the author's survival in concentration camps.
- *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak – A young girl finds solace in stolen books during Nazi Germany.
- *Nothing More to Tell* by Karen M. McManus (Florida Teens Read) – A girl returns to her elite school to uncover the truth behind her favorite teacher's murder.
- *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros – A coming-of-age tale told through poetic vignettes about a Latina girl growing up in Chicago.
- *The Red Palace* by June Hur (Florida Teens Read) – A historical murder mystery set in 18th-century Korea.
- *Some Mistakes Were Made* by Kristin Dwyer (Florida Teens Read) – A story about love, regret, and the pain of growing up and letting go.
- *This Place Is Still Beautiful* by Xixi Tian (Florida Teens Read) – Two sisters reunite after a hate crime challenges their family's unity.
- *We Deserve Monuments* by Jas Hammonds (Florida Teens Read) – A teen discovers family secrets and racism's roots in a small Southern town.
- *What Souls Are Made Of: A Wuthering Heights Remix* by Tasha Suri (Florida Teens Read) – A reimagined classic exploring identity and colonialism.
- *Breathe and Count Back from Ten* by Natalia Sylvester (Florida Teens Read) – A Peruvian American teen with hip dysplasia dreams of being a mermaid performer.
- *I Must Betray You* by Ruta Sepetys (Florida Teens Read) – A gripping story of a teen spy in 1989 Romania resisting dictatorship. [Back to Top](#)

Grades 9–12 Activities:

Bright Minds, Bright Paths: A Summer of Exploration and Growth

- **Book Trailer Creation:** Students can create a movie-style trailer for a book they've read. They can write a script, gather visual materials (such as clips, photos, or artwork), and present it as a video or digital slideshow.
 - **Host a Virtual Book Club:** Students can form small virtual book clubs with friends or classmates, where they pick a book, read it together, and meet online to discuss it. They can prepare questions, share favorite quotes, and debate the book's
 - **Create a Book Timeline:** Have students create a timeline that outlines the key events of a book, including any flashbacks or shifts in time. They can design it as a digital timeline or a large poster with images and explanations for each event.
 - **Write an Alternate Perspective:** Students can pick a scene from a book and rewrite it from the perspective of a different character. This could give a deeper understanding of how the same event could be interpreted differently.
 - **Design a Social Media Profile for a Character:** Students can create a social media profile (like a Facebook or Instagram account) for a character, including posts, photos, and updates about what the character might be doing in the present day. They can also write "status updates" about events from the book.
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English Language Arts Activities

Keep your writing and vocabulary skills sharp with fun literacy activities:

- Keep a summer journal with daily entries or short stories.
- Write postcards to friends or family.
- Create your own comic strip based on a book or summer experience.
- Play word games like Scrabble, Boggle, or Wordle.

Library Story Time & Read-Aloud Programs



Local Public Libraries Offering Story Time:

- **Alachua County Library District** – Visit www.aclib.us/events to find free story times and book clubs for all ages.
- **Saturday Story Time at Depot Park (GNV Public Library)** – Outdoor read-aloud events with themed crafts and snacks. [View Event Info](#)



Online Read-Aloud Resources:

- [Storyline Online](#) – Celebrities read popular children's books aloud.
- [Vooks](#) – Animated storybooks (free trial available).

Math Games & Activities

Make math fun with hands-on and brain-boosting activities:

- Cook together and measure ingredients—talk about fractions and conversions.
- Play card games like "War" using math facts (e.g., highest sum wins).
- Create a lemonade stand and build a simple profit and expense chart.
- Go on a shape or number scavenger hunt at the park or grocery store.
- Use sidewalk chalk to draw and solve math problems.
- Estimate and measure distances or weights using household objects.
- Design a mini golf course using geometry concepts!

Online Resources:

- [Khan Academy](#)
- [ABCya](#)
- [Cool Math Games](#)

Math Readiness Practice (Middle & High School)

- Review grade-level skills with [Khan Academy](#) and [CPALMS](#).
 - Practice real-world math: budgeting, recipes, home projects.
 - Join online summer challenges in [Math Nation](#) or [IXL](#) if available.
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Science Fun in the Community

Explore science right here in Alachua County!

- [Cade Museum](#) – Hands-on science and invention exhibits.
- [Santa Fe College Zoo](#) – Learn about animal habitats and conservation.
- [Florida Museum of Natural History](#) – Butterflies, fossils, and more!
- Morningside Nature Center – Hikes, animal encounters, and a living history farm.
- Depot Park Water Cycle Walk – Discuss the water cycle while playing at the splash pad!
- Make a solar oven using a pizza box and measure temperature changes.
- Start a garden and chart plant growth with drawings and measurements.

Online Science Fun:

- [NASA Kids Club](#)
 - [Mystery Science](#)
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Social Studies & Local History

Get to know your community:

- [Matheson History Museum](#) – Learn about Gainesville's past.
 - [Historic Haile Homestead](#) – Explore local 1850s life.
 - Create a family tree and interview relatives to discover your roots.
 - Design a brochure or travel poster for a historical Alachua site.
 - Start a “Summer Current Events” scrapbook with clippings and reactions to local news.
 - Use Google Earth to explore historical landmarks or compare satellite images.
 - Create a time capsule with items that reflect your life today.
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STEAM Education for All Students

Engage in exciting opportunities that integrate Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math! STEAM education encourages innovation, critical thinking, and hands-on exploration for students of all ages.

- Participate in science fairs or invention challenges hosted by local museums and schools.
- Create art using math—try geometric drawing, symmetry painting, or coding pixel art.
- Use apps or websites to experiment with music mixing, stop-motion animation, or design.
- Explore careers that combine creativity and technology like architecture, video game design, or medical research.
- Visit local spots like the Cade Museum, Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo, Harn Museum and Florida Museum of Natural History to see STEAM in action.

Free STEAM Apps & Online Tools

- [Tinkercad](#) – Beginner-friendly 3D design, electronics, and coding tool
- [Scratch](#) – Create interactive stories, games, and animations through block coding
- [PBS Kids Design Squad](#) – Hands-on challenges in engineering and invention
- [Chrome Music Lab](#) – Explore music and sound through experiments
- [NASA Visualization Explorer](#) – Real-time space and Earth science visuals
- [SketchUp for Schools](#) – Web-based 3D modeling tool for creative building

STEAM Video Resources

- [SciShow Kids](#) – Engaging science videos for elementary learners
- [Crash Course Kids](#) – Fun videos explaining science and engineering
- [NASA STEM YouTube Channel](#) – Space science and innovation for students
- [Code.org Videos](#) – Learn how coding and creativity come together

Girls in STEM & Career Exploration

- [UF Girls Who Code](#)
- Explore STEM through local programs at [Santa Fe College's STEM Programs](#) and [UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County](#).
- Watch inspiring women in STEM on YouTube or explore [NASA's "Women@NASA" profiles](#).