

On the Front Lines: Community College Libraries Engaging Early College High School Students

About the Pitt Community College Library

Pitt Community College (PCC) was chartered in March 1961 by the North Carolina State Board of Education. Since then, the library has grown right alongside the campus, supporting 44 associate degree programs, 20 certificate programs, 22 diploma programs, 18 university transfer programs, and a variety of continuing education options.

Today, the library is located in the two-story Clifton W. Everett Building. The first floor is a spacious, open area with plenty of different study spots and the circulation desk at the center of it all. Upstairs, you'll find the print collection—over 24,000 items—along with a computer lab, the reference desk, and several study rooms. The library also provides digital resources, which include over 150 databases containing thousands of materials.

Our team includes five full-time librarians, two part-time librarians, one full-time staff member, and three part-time staff members—all here to help our students make the most of their library experience.



Clifton W. Everett building where PCC library is located

Our Early College High School Partnership

One way we demonstrate our commitment to campus partnerships and student success is through our work with the Early College High School (ECHS) community. We've built a strong partnership with the Pitt County Schools Early College High School (PCS-ECHS), which is located right on our campus. Early College High Schools are fantastic programs that allow high school students to enroll in college-level courses—and sometimes even graduate with an associate degree. The PCS-ECHS has called the PCC campus home for 10 years and currently serves 300 students alongside 13 teachers and 9 staff members. Without a dedicated high school library, these students rely on the PCC Library for resources, materials, and library instruction. That's why it's essential for us to actively engage with the Early College's faculty and staff—otherwise, many students might miss out on what's available to them.

To make sure we reach these students, we've developed several ways to stay connected. Our library offers a great selection of Young Adult (YA) books, graphic novels, and comics in print, plus a robust online collection through resources like *Comics Plus* and *Dogwood Digital* for e-books and audiobooks.



CLIFTON W. EVERETT BUILDING (CWE)

One thing that sets us apart is that we bring the library experience directly to the Early College. My colleague Angela Davis started our “Pop Up Library,” where we visit the school weekly during lunch to check out, return, or renew books, answer questions, and get to know students, which helps students feel at home with their librarians. We’ve also hosted fun lunchtime activities featuring games like Halloween Trivia and Name That Holiday Tune, and for several years, Angela and I have co-captained the High School Battle of the Books team. We also tailor our library instruction based on what each instructor needs—sometimes in the library, sometimes right in their classrooms.

Our Conference Presentation and Ideas from Other Community College Libraries

In February 2025, Angela and I had the opportunity to present at the North Carolina Community College Library Association’s annual conference. Representing Pitt Community College, we shared our session, “Engaging CCP & Early College High School Students: Successes and Strategies.” Our goal at the conference was not only to share our experiences but also to hear how other community college libraries are working with their early college partners.

Here are some of their budget-friendly and engaging approaches:

- “At [Fayetteville Technical Community College], I created a Scavenger Hunt to encourage students to tour the library, archives, makerspace, etc.”
- “Our ECHS love our ‘crafternoons’ and especially enjoy our special events (freebies, snacks, drawings). We try to partner with Student Life, and this helps with support and budget!”
- “Lenoir [Community College] hosts a week-long research workshop with our Early College sophomores to teach them how to research for their College Readiness Projects (CRPs)! It’s a great way to get the students comfortable with the library and the staff. They are our most active patrons, and our [Young Adult] collection is the most popular.”
- “We have coordinated with our Early College 9th-grade English class to come in monthly for circulation.”
- “We’ve noticed our students really like on-demand content. To help encourage library engagement, even if they don’t come in, we make short video tutorials (no longer than three minutes most of the time) called ‘Library Crash Courses.’ We have thousands of views on these!”

These shared practices show just how many creative ways there are to connect with Early College students, regardless of resources.



Final Takeaways

We feel fortunate at PCC to offer these services, but we recognize the challenges many community college libraries face, including staffing, time, and access to both resources and students themselves. At the conference, we learned ways other colleges are adapting, and one message stood out: even small steps can make a big difference. We encourage our fellow

librarians to reach out regularly to their Early College partners, making faculty and staff aware of resources and reinforcing that the ECHS is a vital part of the community college campus too.

To learn more about what the PCC library offers our Early College students, please visit our LibGuide: <https://libguides.pittcc.edu/highschool>.





ECHS students on a scavenger hunt



An ECHS class at the library for orientation



An ECHS English class at the library for library instruction