

Polk County Early College

School Improvement Plan

2025-2026



1545 NC-108
Columbus, NC 28722

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2025-2026
School Improvement Plan**

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Polk County Schools

Vision Statement

Every student is inspired, prepared, and empowered for a future of lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

Mission Statement

In partnership with families and our community, Polk County Schools prepares each student to thrive in a diverse, dynamic world by fostering academic excellence, personal growth, and the development of critical life skills.

Core Values

- *Relationships – Trusting, respectful connections among students, staff, families, and the broader community are essential for success.*
- *Opportunity for All – Every student deserves access to opportunities that support their highest potential.*
- *Community – Strong collaboration with families and local partners enhances learning and school improvement.*
- *Integrity – We act in the best interests of our students and uphold high ethical standards.*
- *Innovation – We embrace creativity, adaptability, and continuous improvement in teaching and learning.*

Polk County Early College

Mission Statement

Polk County Early College empowers students through rigorous, inclusive education, fostering academic excellence, critical thinking, and readiness for college, careers, and civic life. Through personalized learning and community partnerships, we equip students for higher education, service, or meaningful employment.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to cultivate a community of lifelong learners who are resilient, innovative, and socially responsible. Polk County Early College aims to be a model of educational excellence, fostering a culture where every student is inspired to reach their full potential and contribute positively to the global society.

Core Beliefs

- **Student-Centered Learning:** We believe that each student is unique and deserves personalized educational experiences that cater to their individual strengths and aspirations.
- **Academic Excellence:** We are committed to maintaining high academic standards and providing challenging curricula that prepare students for post-secondary success.
- **Community Engagement:** We value strong partnerships with families, local organizations, and the broader community to support student growth and development.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** We are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated, and all students have equitable access to opportunities.
- **Lifelong Learning:** We foster a love for learning that extends beyond the classroom, encouraging students to be curious, reflective, and adaptable in a rapidly changing world.

Isothermal Community College's Mission Statement:

As an integral community partner, Isothermal Community College exists to improve life through learning by providing innovative, affordable educational programs and inclusive opportunities for personal, professional, economic, and cultural development.

Goal 1

Polk County Early College will continue to meet growth in academic measures for tested subjects, including Math 1 & 3, English 2, and Biology, through academic rigor and personalized education.

Evidence of Need	Action Steps	Evidence of Progress	Timeline for Completion
Math - Data for Freshman entering PCEC in the Fall of 2025 illustrates a lack of proficiency in Math 8 skills with average formative assessment scores equaling 38.2% prior to corrections and 50% after corrections.	Using Spiral reviews and an increase in interventions, the math instructor will assess individual student needs of basic math skills that are less than proficient and design instruction to address those needs while still addressing the pacing required for Math 1 & 3.	- Increase in score averages on both formative and summative assessments prior to corrections - Proficient scores on NC Check-Ins with a minimum 2% increase	- Daily review and interventions - October Check-In data collection - December 2025 EOC completion for Math 1
English - Freshman data shows a lack of general proficiency in reading comprehension and writing skills.	- The English instructor will review sentence structure and parts of speech to increase basic writing skills. - The instructor will use reading comprehension strategies, including guided discussion, to increase basic comprehension skills.	- Decrease in grammatical errors in essay responses - Cohesive sentence structures - Essay responses that address the given prompts with outlines - Socratic seminar participation - Annotations when reading	- Weekly writing practice - Spring ENG 2 Check-Ins as EOC predictor - ENG 2 EOC May 2026

		• NC Check-In scores reflective of proficiency and/or mastery of comprehension for grade-level text	
Biology - Biology EOC scores have consistently met growth. However, with reading and math scores for the district trending down in proficiency, it is imperative that non-fiction texts, such as those presented in science classes, be a source of rigor for students.	• The instructor will use rigorous texts to support hands-on learning and lab experiences to support the English standards. • The instructor will require an in-depth written analysis of topics to support the English standards.	• Improved written lab analysis • Continued proficient and mastery scores on NC Check-Ins and EOCs	• Weekly written analysis assignments • Weekly rigorous text use • Supported hands-on learning

Goal 2

Polk County Early College will provide a collaborative atmosphere with social-emotional learning support to increase student resiliency and promote productive citizenship.

Evidence of Need	Action Steps	Evidence of Progress	Timeline for Completion
Many students have significant anxiety issues related to screen time, family issues, and social anxiety. There is an increased number of students seeing counselors, social	• Implementation of Character Strong through a grant with PCCF as a pilot school for secondary-level schools.	• Fewer students needing accommodations for anxiety • Fewer students in counseling (inside and	• On-going efforts

workers, and therapists. There is a higher number of students receiving accommodations through 504 Plans for anxiety than in past years.	- Encouraging students to participate in clubs such as SAVE, Key Club, and Unified Champions and community service through Student Council - Development of a "house system" within the early college to foster community - Implementation of the no cell phone policy	- outside agencies) - More students are participating in clubs and activities, showing a decrease in social anxiety issues.	
Many students are actively seeking opportunities to gain mentorship in the community, leading to jobs for the future.	- BOLT Mentor Program - Job Shadowing (made possible through WNC-R grant)	Active participation in either of these opportunities by 50% or more of our students.	On-going efforts

Goal 3

Polk County Early College will be dedicated to its rebranding to increase enrollment by 10.8% each year over the course of the next three years by working to build a collaborative culture with all stakeholders, including Isothermal Community College, Polk County High School, Polk County Middle School and community agencies.

Evidence of Need	Action Steps	Evidence of Progress	Timeline for Completion
Enrollment has been rapidly declining over the past five years. PCEC has accepted students who do not meet the Early College Network criteria	PCEC will follow the prescribed guidelines for enrollment in early colleges, which include first-generation college	There were 18 applicants last year, and all were accepted despite not all meeting generalized guidelines.	- Continuous efforts throughout the year - Enrollment increased to 75 or greater by Fall 2027/Spring 2028

in order to keep enrollment numbers up. This is causing instructors to have to modify rigor, which will have a direct impact on scores and growth.	students, economically disadvantaged, and/or those who desire accelerated learning with honors courses. • All applicants accepted will be screened using a new application process that is points-based with weighted areas for New Century Scholars through ICC, honor roll, EOG scores, and listed factors presented by the Early College Network.	Evidence of progress will include an increase in eligible applicants, preferably a 10.8% increase each year over the next three years, to increase enrollment from 55 to 75 minimum. • A new application process has been developed for the Spring of 2026. • The school logo, mission statement, vision statement, and core values have been redone. • Students are participating in high school events, including band, sports, ballgames, etc. • The early college staff is creating events for students and prospective students throughout the year. • The principal and teachers are completing outreach with the middle school students and teachers, including attending field trips with them, classroom visits, PCEC	
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		newsletters sent to 7th and 8th-grade students throughout the school year, and recruitment events scheduled for Fall and Spring of the current academic year. - Prospective student open house by invitation, based on ECN guidelines, is scheduled for the Spring. - Updated website & regular social media posts - Increased social media traffic	
A deterrent to enrollment is the past lack of collaborative efforts between the early college and the high school. Students who are interested in CTE classes have only been able to take classes offered at Isothermal and not at the high school. However, without transportation to the main ICC campus, CTE course offerings are limited.	- PCEC has modified its schedule to mirror the high school schedule to allow PCEC students to participate in CTE courses that fit their programs of choice at the high school. - PCEC will work with WNC Resiliency Grant agencies to build career pathways with ICC that include the ability to take certificate programs and certification classes from the main campus.	- The CTE director is working on transcript review with the PCEC principal for WorkKeys opportunities. - Work with the WNC Resiliency grant partners has begun, and PCEC will be working in conjunction with a Buncombe County early college with similar Career Pathway goals. - ICC liaison is working to establish paths on the ICC side for	Spring 2026 and Fall 2026 will be the first schedules to be inclusive.

		Seniors to get certificates that lead straight into the workforce.	
PCEC has limited opportunities for students to engage in clubs and community service, which has had a direct impact on college application and acceptance rates. Students must have the ability to prove they are well-rounded individuals with various experiences in their backgrounds that illustrate leadership and growth.	• PCEC has established the following clubs for the 2025-2026 academic year: ◦ FCA with Mr. B.J. Laughter ◦ Theater with Tryon Fine Arts Center & Marianne Carruth ◦ Rhythm Runners - Music ◦ Art ◦ Fiber Arts ◦ Design ◦ Yearbook through Strawbridge Trailblazers through the NC Outdoor Youth Commission ◦ Debate Club ◦ Student Council with the North Carolina Association of Student Councils	• All clubs are established and up and running. • Progress will be determined by participation numbers and sustainability.	• Fall 2025

	o Key Club, in conjunction with Kiwanis		
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School Improvement Team Members & Voting Information

Kim McMinn	Principal	
Jessica Simo	Math/ SIT Chair	
Lisa Chapman	English	
Holly Stone	History	
Barry Feldman	Science	
Leah Foster	Support Staff	
Jennifer Pittman	Parent	
Amanda Lammers	Parent	

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