



## How One NC District Maximized Funds Received to Make Its Libraries Diverse, Inclusive, and Appropriate Across 35 Different Campuses

PITT COUNTY SCHOOLS  
GREENVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

When Meredith Ward Hill started her position as District Media Specialist with Pitt County Schools prior to the 2019-20 school year, her primary focus was on equity and inclusion. She wanted to make sure that not only were the Greenville, North Carolina-based district's library book collections diverse and inclusive, but also that its programming was the same.

One of the district's challenges was identifying the differing needs of its 36 schools: 16 elementary schools, six K-8 schools, seven middle schools, and six high schools.

Two-thirds of the way into her first year at Pitt County Schools, the pandemic hit. Months later, the district was the recipient of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds, almost \$2 million earmarked for updating collections to ensure that they were equitable and inclusive.



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**MEREDITH WARD HILL**

*Northeast Digital Teaching & Learning Consultant*

*North Carolina Department of Public Instruction*

Although the funds were available to spend, Hill and her team did the wise thing: exercised patience, trusted the process, and garnered a true understanding of what was needed where so that each dollar would be spent wisely to ensure the collections were diverse, inclusive, and tailored to each campus and age range.

Knowing she had a massive project in front of her, Hill reached out to Follett Content for help as a professional development partner and, significantly, for helping the district envision new, practical, and personalized goals for school library collections by grade. She also wanted her Sales Consultant, Karei Swift, to support her media coordinators.

Pitt County Schools, in partnership with Follett Content, charted a plan to tackle the project, including how to:

- Build out a collection development plan
- Identify demographics
- Identify what is needed
- Plan the purchases
- Advocate for funding
- Communicate with administrators and teachers

The first year was devoted to professional development and collection weeding; the second and third years focused on purchasing. “The template Meredith laid down to turn around Pitt County Schools’ library programs is now being replicated throughout eastern North Carolina,” Swift said. “Educators are singing her praises all over the place.”

Hill returned the praise to Swift, saying his number-one goal throughout “was to build relationships and ensure the project’s success.” Hill went on to explain the value of the TitleWise® analysis, including TitleMAP™ reports detailing weeding recommendations and the costs of updating collections to ensure each campus had exactly what it needed. “[Karei] also provided significant support in providing TitleMAPs and professional development on maximizing the power of the TitleMAP to be able to explain to stakeholders the necessity of weeding and the impact it has on collection age and overall cost of updating a collection.”

“Every library in our district was impacted by this project,” Hill continued. “Based on helpful reports we received from Follett, we were able to remove old, inaccurate, damaged, outdated, and uncirculated books and make room for new, exciting books to support the curriculum, represent inclusive demographics, and meet both the

academic and personal reading needs of all our students.”

Hill took advantage of TitleWise to break down the collections by important characteristics to help quickly diagnose the libraries’ strengths and weaknesses, plan an effective weeding strategy, and make smarter purchasing decisions.

“The TitleWise tool proved to be vital, as it gave our media coordinators concrete data to identify gaps in their collections and advocate for needed funds,” Hill said. “The Diversity Analysis tool was especially helpful as a starting point for identifying underrepresented populations. It would offer suggestions on the number of books on various topics to include.”

“We ordered thousands of books,” Hill shared. “It helped tremendously that Follett shipped them to us shelf-ready and in True Dewey Order. Getting the books on the shelves would have taken months without that service.”

Now that the project is complete and the libraries and their staff are operating so well, Hill can focus on her new position. In August 2023, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction hired her as its new Northeast Digital Teaching & Learning Consultant. Obviously, Hill’s success at Pitt County Schools did not go unnoticed, and she credits the support of Follett Content with much of her success.

“Karei’s personalized support, along with the quality of product and speed of delivery, won over many of our media coordinators, who are now dedicated Follett customers,” she observed. “I cannot say enough about the support, passion, knowledge, and experience that he brought to our project and brings to all the districts he represents.”

Follett Content and Swift continue to work with Hill in her new role with the state.



Navigating the landscape of grant funding can be complicated.  
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