

## **Easley Trumpets Online Courses: College Study Free For High-Schoolers**

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Gov. Mike Easley said Wednesday that high school students have an amazing opportunity.

If only they knew about it.

Easley spoke to superintendents and school leaders Wednesday to announce an aggressive marketing campaign to promote Learn and Earn Online, a program that allows high school students across the state to take online college courses free.

The program has earned nationwide recognition, but few students have taken advantage of it. The program had enough money for 12,000 course enrollments in the 2007-2008 school year and 28,000 this year. Fewer than 2,000 students have taken courses.

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But Easley remains confident in the program's potential.

"This has been bigger and better than anything I ever dreamed that it would be," Easley said. "But it's also the best-kept secret in education in North Carolina."

Easley said that starting this week, officials will use a mix of public money and private dollars from education groups to promote Learn and Earn Online to students, parents and educators. The legislature authorized the state Department of Public Instruction to use up to \$1 million to promote programs such as Learn and Earn Online.

The New Schools Project, a nonprofit created by Easley and others with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has already raised \$500,000 for the effort, Easley said.

The campaign will involve television commercials and Internet ads and other strategies, including student ambassadors who will promote options for students to middle schoolers. And Easley spoke to the meeting of school officials to encourage them to push the program even more.

Tedarryl Powell, 16, and his mother, Dana Powell, attended Easley's speech Wednesday. Tedarryl is a rising junior at Clement Early College High School in Durham, which combines high school and college curriculum.

When he graduates, Tedarryl will have more than a semester's worth of college under his belt. That will save his mother money when Tedarryl goes to college. He plans to be a dermatologist.

Tedarryl has agreed to promote campuses such as Clement and online offerings to middle school students. He said he agrees with Easley's assertion that more people would take advantage of the opportunity, if only they knew about it.

"It makes a lot of sense," Tedarryl said.

"Unless you like to give away money," added his mother.