



N.C. Gov. Beverly Perdue unveils a state education initiative to better prepare students for careers or college at the Core Laboratory on the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis Wednesday.

Photo by [Kathy Chaffin](#), Salisbury Post

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KANNAPOLIS — Gov. Beverly Perdue said Wednesday the Core Lab on the N.C. Research Campus was an appropriate place to announce her education initiative aimed at improving student achievement and better preparing them for careers or college.

"It's always reminded me of phoenix rising from the ashes," she said. When Perdue visited Kannapolis after Pillowtex

closed in July of 2003, she said the spirit of the people was dismal.

At that point, displaced Pillowtex employees in their 40s, 50s and 60s were having to go back to school to get their GEDs (General Education Development) in order to find jobs.

Today, the new biotech hub is located on the site of the former Cannon Mills Plant No. 1.

Perdue unveiled the initiative called "Career and College — Ready, Set, Go!" at a joint session of the State Board of Education and the governing boards of the University of North Carolina system, the N.C. Community College System and the N.C. Independent Colleges and Universities organization.

Perdue said almost a third of the state's high school freshman drop out by their senior year.

"We must refocus our state's public schools on a single goal," she said in a press release about the initiative. "Every kid — no matter where he or she lives in North Carolina — must graduate from high school with what it really takes to succeed in a career, in a two- or four-year college or technical training. That means no more losing out on jobs that require more than low skills and no more remedial courses in college.

"Graduates will have what it really takes."

The education initiative, according to a release from the governor's office, will work in the following three steps:

- Ready: Increasing the number of students who can read, write and do math by the end of third grade;
- Set: Increasing the number of students that perform at or above grade level;
- Go: Increasing the number of students taking college credit courses in high school; graduating from high school; going to college; and completing their degrees from a community college, college or university.

Specific policy highlights include:

- Incentives for great teachers in hard to staff schools and content areas;
- Leadership academy for school leaders;
- Restructuring the ABCs program to include diagnostic assessment, 21st Century skills and national assessments so the state can see how North Carolina students compare to others across the nation and world;
- Adopting the Common Core national standards so everyone agrees on the skills that all students need to know to graduate ready to work, go to college or vocational school;
- Community college readiness initiative for diagnostic-type assessments to make sure students graduate with skills necessary to do community college work.