



Empowering today's teachers. Educating tomorrow's leaders.

August 30, 2011

Ms. Karen Kaplowitz
Center for America
250 Willow Springs Drive
Roswell, GA 30075

Dear Ms. Kaplowitz:

On behalf of The Orchard Foundation, I am pleased to support the **10 By 20 Pledge for America Campaign**. In Central Louisiana, steps are already being taken to ensure that our region is "work-ready". The Cenla Work Ready Network, launched in spring 2011, is a two-pronged system designed to link education and workforce development efforts and align them with regional economic needs. One goal of the Cenla Work Ready Network is for all Central Louisiana high school students, under-employed or unemployed adults, and incumbent workers to receive work-ready certificates. Another goal is to increase the number of students who receive industry-based certifications in our area high schools. The work is being funded by The Rapides Foundation through a grant to The Orchard Foundation, a nonprofit local education fund that works with school districts, businesses and communities to improve educational opportunities in Central Louisiana.

One component of the Cenla Work Ready Network is to provide Career Ready 101 courseware to all high schools and Louisiana Technical College campuses in nine Central Louisiana parishes. Career Ready 101 is designed to prepare students for the WorkKeys assessment, a job skills assessment system that employers use to select, hire, train, develop and retain a high-performance workforce. Grant funding also allows students to take the WorkKeys assessment without charge which could result in a National Career Readiness Certificate, a credential that proves the student has essential workplace skills when applying for a job.

The second component of the network is to increase the number of students receiving industry-based certifications. The goal of this component is for high-school students to learn skills that prepare them to be career-ready at graduation. To accomplish this goal, partnerships between business leaders and high schools are being facilitated so more students can acquire industry-based certifications prior to graduation. Grant funding from The Rapides Foundation also provides matching funds to implement the industry-based certification curricula.

We pledge our continued expansion of workforce development efforts in Central Louisiana. We will be sharing Center for America's message and the Pledge Campaign with our Cenla Work Ready Network partners to champion your cause and support expanding skills training in our community. To learn more about the Cenla Work Ready Network and other programs supported by The Orchard Foundation, visit the website at www.theorchardfoundation.org.

Sincerely,

Marjorie Taylor, Ed.D.
Executive Director

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