



*From the desk of Richard N. Rickey  
Founder/C.E.O.*

December 19, 2019

As we approach our annual holiday break I want to wish you all a joyous time with family and friends. I know for me I feel especially grateful right now for all the blessings I've had in life. After a recent bout with a rare illness that knocked me out of work for more than a month, I was reminded again how lucky I've been to work with so many talented people at Orenda for all these years. While in recovery I never worried how Orenda would perform in my absence. I'm surrounded by people who are committed to our mission and really good at what they do. I also appreciate all the words of encouragement and well wishes I received during my medical leave of absence. I am very happy to finally be back in the office this week working on our mission to help improve public education for our nation's youth.

Reflecting upon the upcoming new year, and our school second semester, the need for Orenda Education is compelling. Support for ambitious school reform has been broad for more than two decades. However, more recently we are seeing Democratic presidential candidates, big city mayors, and several large Texas ISD Superintendents closing ranks against alternatives to traditional public schooling. We are now in the midst of a counterrevolution against school reform, and especially charter school growth. The keepers of the status quo are coming out in droves to misrepresent public charter schools. I've never seen this much virulence aimed at our charter schools since starting Orenda Education back in 1995.

In his new book, [The Conscience of the Constitution](#), Timothy Sandefur argues that the Declaration of Independence, and its primary principle of liberty, is the conscience of the Constitution. He warns us, that government can become perverted and endanger liberty when it is led by people who believe government gets to decide what freedom should look like, and that it knows best. In contrast, at Orenda we caution our families to stay ever vigilant to this growing endorsement of a status quo public education bureaucracy that wants to take away what is absolutely protected in our Constitution; a parent's freedom to choose a school, and how best to educate their own children.

Happy Holidays and New Year.

Sincerely,

*Richard N. Rickey*