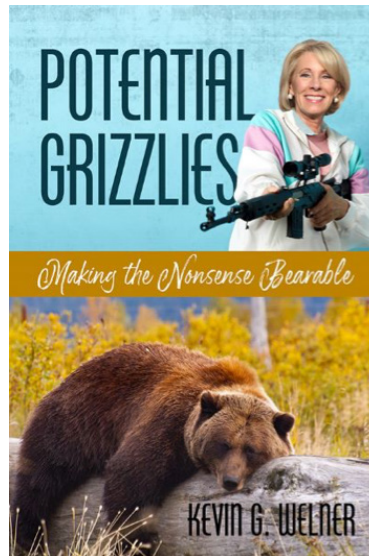




EDUCATION POLICY SATIRE IS WHAT WE NEED TO END THIS BEAR OF A YEAR



2020 has been a bear of a year. So in this, our final newsletter until 2021, we present you, our faithful readers, with some well-deserved cheer to help cope with the madness.

Potential Grizzlies: Making the Nonsense Bearable is the title of NEPC director Kevin Welner's new book satirizing education policy. The title refers to remarks made by soon-to-be-former U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos during her 2017 confirmation hearing, where she tried to explain her stance concerning arming educators by referring to a Wyoming elementary school, saying: "I think probably there, I would imagine that there's probably a gun in the school to protect from potential grizzlies." In addition to borrowing its title from the remarks, which went viral on social media, the book contains a satirical news article headlined: *Secretary DeVos Has Secret Meeting with Potential Grizzly*. (Spoiler alert: it involves a tête-à-tête between the secretary and a Russian bear.)

Like *The Onion*, which inspired its format, Welner's book uses the deadpan tone of news writing to parody a parade of real-life thorny and not-so-funny education policy approaches that are so bad that if you didn't laugh at them you'd have to cry.

In the book's introduction, Welner traces its origins to the semester-long paternity leave he took a dozen years earlier, after the birth of his daughter. Grabbing moments of rest while the baby slept on his chest, the new father felt too drained to do work associated with his day job as an education professor at the University of Colorado Boulder. So he'd entertain himself by penning ed-policy-focused "*Onion*-inspired 'news' stories to share with friends." This

past summer, reeling from the pandemic, racist violence, and toxic political environment, Welner again turned his attentions to the much-needed distraction and collected his satirical pieces, adding some new ones, to publish them as a book. He is donating the royalties from its sale to the Network for Public Education. (Click [here](#) to see NPE President Diane Ravitch interview Welner about the book, and click [here](#) for a new, post-book small piece.)

Here are some book excerpts.

- **Headline:** *A Child's School is the Child's Choice*
Excerpt: This morning, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos joined a coalition of school choice groups to announce a new campaign to empower children throughout the U.S. The “A Child’s School is the Child’s Choice” campaign will hand school choice decisions from parents over to their children. “For too long,” said DeVos, “parents have stood between their children and the schools those children want to attend. A child’s school should not be dictated by adults.”
- **Headline:** *Gang Fight Sends Reading Specialists to Hospital*
Excerpt: Law enforcement is continuing its investigation of a gang fight between members of the Southside Phonics and the Outlaw Whole Languages. Sheriff Dibels said they had not yet decoded the series of events leading up to the fight.
- **Headline:** *Chartering Authority Given to Fast Food Chains*
Excerpt: Prospective charter school operators today touted a proposed new law allowing fast food restaurants to create and run new schools . . . “The fast food industry has vast experience with uniforms and even playgrounds.”
- **Headline:** *Out-of-Field Doctoring Addressed by “Operate for America”*
Excerpt: Local hospitals announced today that they are signing on with “Operate for America,” a new program that provides hospitals in low-income communities with college graduates whose zeal, vigor, and youth will more than make up for their lack of qualifications and experience . . . The OFA workers all get five weeks of intensive training the summer before they begin performing surgery.
- **Headline:** *Ungifted to Use Fewer Resources*
Excerpt: After careful study, an Aislada School District task force has concluded that quality education is a limited resource and that students with no giftedness are simply receiving too much of it. The district immediately sent a letter to the parents of ungifted students, explaining that in the future other kids will be getting the school’s best educational opportunities. As the letter explains to the ungifted parents, “This upcoming year, we will provide excellent gifted programs for our more talented students, which does not include your child. As we are sure you’ll understand, your child would not benefit from these outstanding programs, since he or she is not gifted.”

NEPC Resources on Education Policy

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