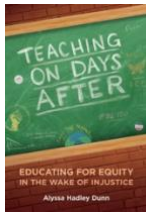


Teaching on Days After: Educating for Equity in the Wake of Injustice

Reviewed by Warren E. Whitaker



**Teaching on Days After:
Educating for Equity in the
Wake of Injustice**

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Columbine, 9/11, Covid, Parkland, 2016 Election, Trayvon Martin, Pulse Night Club, Ukraine, and Uvalde are just a few of the historic and pivotal moments that have significantly impacted our society. Although local, state, and national tragedies may be captured in various media for everyone to consume, little, if any attention is paid to how educators, namely teachers, approach their instruction on the days after these events. In *Teaching on Days After: Educating for Equity in the Wake of Injustice*, Alyssa Hadley Dunn highlights the importance and responsibility that K-12 teachers, classrooms, and schools should play on the days following horrific and controversial societal events. The consequences of action and inaction can significantly impact classroom diversity, educational equity, and systemic injustices. This book is very well organized and provides the reader with a methodical way to understand the Days After Pedagogy (DAP) framework. It begins with the conceptualization and framework (Chapters 1 and 2), transitions to the rationale and stakeholders (Chapters 3–5), and concludes with real-life examples of effective DAP implementation by educators (Chapters 6 and 7) followed by a call to action.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide an overview of the book and DAP framework. Dunn uses a collection of reflections from research interviews with teachers, Dunn's experience as a teacher, and reflective essays from students about their experiences with teachers in classrooms on the days after historic and significant societal events at the end of each chapter. Dunn argues that children, schools, and the world are not mutually exclusive, and that students have reactions and thoughts

from events that they take into school. Hadley does an outstanding job of situating DAP within the influences of the culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogical frameworks while making the argument that using this approach will allow students to develop critical perspectives related to systematic or individual power, oppression, and equity dynamics. DAP's focus on equity eliminates White teachers' propensity to be race neutral. Dunn uses a salient metaphor of a moving walkway to illustrate how White teachers who believe they are not "racist" still perpetuate racism and white supremacy through their race neutral mindset. DAP utilizes a justice asset oriented pedagogical approach that seeks to build on the intelligence, skill sets, and knowledge that students bring to the classroom while intentionally contradicting the traditional damage-centered and deficit approaches used in most classrooms. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how important teachers' use of current and controversial issues is to students' sociopolitical development and implications for how schools address trauma.

Chapter 3 provides the rationale for using DAP within the classroom. It begins with two powerful examples of the importance of a classroom that centers DAP pedagogy. Dunn makes a good point through her own reflection that students, with today's technology access, will have conversations about controversial issues whether they are in the classroom or not. They will have the conversations with friends in different places. This is another reason for teachers to provide a space in their classrooms for students to engage in conversation. Dunn argues against using the term "safe space" because school can be perceived as a threatening and harmful environment to some students. Teachers should use DAP because its sole purpose focuses on students' navigation and experience in their world. It offers them the opportunity to discuss what is important and what they want to learn more about in their world. It allows them to have a say in what they are learning. DAP provides a pathway for more in-depth learning about oppression and using this new knowledge can be a key component in presenting stronger resistance.

Effective use and outcomes of DAP requires that teachers fully know their students, the biggest beneficiaries of this pedagogical approach. In the fourth chapter, Dunn highlights the importance of teachers knowing their students and how this knowledge can contribute to responses to tragedy. What happens in schools on days after a student dies in a car accident, suicide, or from a medical condition? Several examples are provided that show how teacher responses to personal and community tragedies and deaths can significantly impact their grieving process and emotional well-being. This chapter also illustrates how DAP can be used across all ages, grade levels, and content subjects. If teachers aspire to fully embrace their own and students' humanity, they will find ways to provide platforms for students to process thoughts and questions related to the events that are happening in their world. Adults often underestimate the ability of young children and teens to work through perceived complex ideas and concepts. This chapter contains many great examples of how DAP can be used in courses, such as mathematics, music, and science, that are typically not associated with thinking about DAP concepts. Dunn does a phenomenal job of making the point that knowing your students means knowing that their lives are continuous in moments inside and outside of school as well as the short time between periods.

Chapter 5 examines the role that teachers' understanding of themselves plays in effectively implementing DAP in classrooms. Contrary to societal conceptions that teachers are apathetic robots, teachers are humans with thoughts, emotions, and identities. It is important that teachers demonstrate vulnerability with students as they grapple with their feelings and perceptions from events happening in the world. Dunn argues that this makes the space even more safe by allowing students to see the humanity of their fellow students. This dynamic is also important when making curriculum decisions that prioritize social justice. Dunn does a very good job of

highlighting the differences in experiences and decision making related to curriculum for White teachers and teachers of color. White teachers, being in the dominant racial population for educators and thus benefitting from White privilege, can choose “creative” or intentional insubordination methods to implement DAP into their classrooms while teachers of color, who have been historically marginalized and discriminated against in education, must be more strategic in finding ways to advocate for their own self-interest and humanity using DAP in their classrooms. This calculation, in addition to the aggressions that teachers of color face combined with the emotional labor they carry, presents significant challenges. These challenges are compounded by the emotional labor they carry in wanting to advocate for students of color as well as themselves. Therefore, the onus must be on White teachers to acknowledge, understand, and be able to distinguish between whiteness, White people, and White supremacy while using their privilege to implement DAP to have discussions in their classrooms that can create opportunities for dismantling of oppressive systems including systematic racism.

Chapters 6 and 7 examine real-life examples of using DAP after significant events while making an emphatic and much needed call-out of White teachers of White students. Examples of implementation of DAP include after political elections, after gun violence in schools, and after natural disasters, climate crisis, and gender injustice. There are a diverse range of strategies teachers utilized to incorporate DAP in different ways in their classrooms. Dunn shifts in Chapter 7 to demand that White teachers utilize DAP to talk about individual and systemic racism and White supremacy occurring in our country. Dunn accurately points out that White students may not feel the effects of racial oppressive systems but often benefit from White supremacy and must understand the role it plays in perpetuating oppressive societal systems. It is incumbent on White teachers to acknowledge the White privilege they hold and work through it to foster a safe classroom environment for students of color. The increase in situations with interpretation of symbols and words, and their role in perpetuating racism in schools, is discussed. While an excuse for using an offensive symbol or gesture may be that it was not the student’s “intent,” it is important to consider intent versus the impact. Although White students may not intend to harm Black, Brown, or Indigenous students with gestures or, for example, wearing a confederate t-shirt, the impact on students of color can be a traumatizing experience.

There are several excellent examples of White teachers using DAP to center the experiences of students of color within a broader historical or localized context. It is important that teachers employing DAP connect racism and White supremacy happening outside the class to the content they are providing for students in the classroom. This chapter contains evidence to show that DAP can be used at all grade levels and with all students.

Dunn concludes the book with an illustration of a school that has adopted DAP and considerations for the future. Eric, an interviewee and music teacher, describes the school culture at the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School (MELS) in New York City. MELS has buy-in from leadership, teachers, and students. They provide an intentional class period and collective student grade level meeting as spaces for DAP. Students can voice their opinions, concerns, activism, and other thoughts about any local, state, or national events with teachers and fellow peers. While these courses are no substitution for teachers using a DAP approach in their classrooms, they offer another level for students to engage in and have agency and voice in their educational experience. While DAP may not be easy to implement in the classroom, it is essential that teachers critically utilize DAP to ensure they are meeting the whole students’ educational needs to go beyond the classroom into their everyday lives and experiences. Regardless of the political climate, teachers must be fearless and centered in district curriculum adoption and implementation conversations.

Dunn reiterates six tools to use as they enter the battlefield of the classroom and school district: reject neutrality, humanize students, acknowledge personal identity and privilege, collaborate with others, establish agreements for dialogs, and be ready for individuals opposing your DAP approach. This book may not address some of the dynamics that influence the ability to implement curriculum and have meaningful discussion about race, gender, and other identities in the classroom. This book provides a blueprint with many examples from Dunn's research and student essays related to how to ensure that students can explore, discuss, and experience events happening in their everchanging world. Dunn does a phenomenal job of explicitly calling out, placing the onus on, and providing strategies for White teachers to transition from the "business as usual" approach to "social justice co-conspirators" willing to use their privilege to create a safer learning community with students that are willing to prioritize the needs of people who may not have similar identities, thoughts, or experiences.

Author Biography

Warren E. Whitaker, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Educational Leadership for Diverse Learning Communities EdD program at Molloy University. He received a PhD in Leadership Studies with a concentration in Higher Education Leadership from the University of San Diego in 2018. He has been teaching in higher education graduate programs since 2018. Dr. Whitaker's teaching and research expertise includes curriculum and pedagogy for diverse learners, critical pedagogy and teacher development for social justice, critical and socio-cultural theories of education, and critical qualitative research methods. Currently, he teaches doctoral courses including EDU 6220: Curriculum Theories and Best Practices for Diverse Learners; EDU 6180: Preparing for the Dissertation: The Literature Review; and EDU 6260: Collaborative Leadership in 21st Century Education Organizations. His current research focuses on the postsecondary transition of students with disabilities and the intersection of critical pedagogy and neoliberal education. Dr. Whitaker has authored and co-authored several scholarly publications including a chapter in Schoper and French's (2021) ACPA College Student Educators International Monograph. He is a member of the *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability* and *SCOPE Journal of Leadership and Instruction* editorial boards.