Discussion Activity: It All Begins with a Conversation—2

Read Chapter 14, “What’s Motivating This Writer?: Reading for the Conversation,” (pp. 173-83) and as you turn to assigned readings in your class, pay attention to more than what the author is saying. Go beyond reading for content in one source, and identify the arguments the author is responding to in each of your assigned readings. Your classroom teacher will assign readings.

Hint: Authors usually reveal very early what they are responding to, so look in the introduction.

Questions to ask of the sample passages below:

- “What other argument(s) is the writer responding to?”
- “Is the writer disagreeing or agreeing with something, and if so what?”
- “Are there other ideas that you have encountered in this class or elsewhere that might be relevant in this case?”
- “How does the author’s own argument respond to something others have already said or written?”

Sample passages that are responding to others:

- “Scholars in political economy and the sociology of knowledge recently argued that public schools in complex industrial societies like our own make available different types of educational experience and curriculum knowledge to students in different social classes.”

- Although literacy is a problem of pressing national concern, we have yet to discover or set its boundaries. This observation, made several years ago by a leading political spokesman (McGovern 1978), echoes a long-standing complaint of many policymakers and educators that what counts as literacy in our technological society is a matter "not very well understood" (Advisory Committee on National Illiteracy 1929).

- “The labels *literate* and *illiterate* almost always imply more than a degree or deficiency of skill. They are, grossly or subtly, sociocultural judgments laden with approbation, disapproval, or pity about the character and place, the worthiness and prospects, of persons and groups.”
  (Knoblauch, C. H. (1990). Literacy and the politics of education. *The right to literacy, 74*-80.)