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# *Discussion Suggestions*

*I*nstead of offering a set of discussion questions for each chapter, we created the following list of general questions that can be applied to any chapter (or chapters). We suggest that you glance through the questions and select one or two to address. Or pull some colleagues together and follow the conversation wherever it leads.

Weigh what you've just read against your own experience. Does your time in the classroom confirm or refute or modify anything you've encountered in this chapter?

Consider identifying the one or two sentences (or paragraphs) within the chapter that strike you as most powerful, or provocative, or dubious, and reflect on your strong reaction to them. You might then discuss those responses with one or two other readers.

Have you found in what you've read any implications for your own teaching or for your school? Which ideas suggested in these pages are you most likely to apply in your own teaching?

After reading this chapter, think of one class, or perhaps one small group out of that class, or perhaps an individual student, and reflect on your experiences with him (or them) in light of what the chapter has offered you. Does the essay in any way affect your thinking about that student (or those students)? Does it suggest other ways you might have addressed that student and the problems he posed for you? Does it confirm the validity of whatever approach you did take? Does it give you any ideas about other possibilities, other alternatives, other strategies with which you might have approached the teaching?

No twenty-page chapter will cover every aspect of any given topic. So, what issues related to the topic of this chapter would you like to explore further, read more about, or discuss with your colleagues?

If you can find teachers from different circumstances with whom to discuss your reading, consider with them how their experiences in different grade levels, with different subject matter, or in schools different in some way from your own might have affected their reading of this chapter. Do teachers in other schools, or with other responsibilities, react to this chapter differently? What accounts for those differences? Can you deduce from your conversations a broader perspective that might be taken on this topic?

Are there any points made by this chapter with which you strongly disagree? Where do you differ with the author—in what ways is your own reasoning contradictory to hers? What other evidence do you have from your own teaching or your study that suggests a different perspective or a different conclusion?

Political forces are impinging upon education, perhaps more so now than ever before. Does your reading of this chapter suggest to you anything about the effects of political forces upon the schools or upon your classroom? Are state or national political factors called to mind by this essay?

Do any of the other chapters that you have already read, or that you anticipate reading, speak to the issues in this particular chapter? How do the essays compare? Do they suggest similar, or consistent, or drastically different approaches to the educational issues addressed?

If you were to pursue your investigation of this chapter's topic in further reading, where would you begin? Are there any essays, books, entire journals, or websites that you think would extend your reflection on the subject matter? If so, you might consider finding a few interested colleagues and agree to undertake some of that reading so that you might extend the discussion in some subsequent meeting.

Throughout this book are interludes—moments where you read lessons that individuals have learned about teaching and learning and adolescents. Write your own essay that highlights lessons you'd want to pass on to another teacher.

If you are an experienced teacher, does what you've read suggest ways in which you might help new teachers begin their careers more happily and successfully? Does it suggest any guidance or assistance you might offer them?

If you look back at the table of contents, you'll see short comments above the chapter titles that can be read from one title to the next to help you see the shape and flow of this book. This order of chapters, however, is by no means the only order—which we discovered as we moved certain chapters from one place to another. Did this order work for you? If not, how would you reorder the chapters?

Contributing authors were asked to think of the invitation to contribute as an invitation to a dinner party where they knew the talk would be passionate and the ideas provocative. In reading this book, you've now joined this gathering. What other topics would you like to hear discussed at this dinner party? What question are you most interested in asking?

Where to from here? Anything significant that we read should change us, if only slightly, and perhaps lead to some action. Having read this chapter (or these chapters), what will you do next as a professional in your classroom and in your school?