This part of the Handbook addresses two critical issues: the assessment of reflection and reflective practice and identifying and addressing the ethical dimensions of reflective practice. The four chapters of this section take up related issues. Chapter 23 begins with the important task of formative assessment, how to observe children and investigate their thinking in order not simply to assess it but to understand how children understand; Chap. 24 investigates and lays out critical elements of portfolio assessment, how it can be done, and with what kind of validity; Chap. 25 is a companion chapter to Chap. 24, addressing how to teach and engage in portfolio assessment as a scaffold to reflective inquiry. Chapter 26 identifies some of the hidden ethical issues that can emerge when engaging in reflective practice.

Chapter 23: Developing Skills for Observation and Critical Thinking / Formative Inquiry Practices

How can they be taught well? This chapter, by authors Herb Ginsburg, Ann Cami, and Michael Preston, opens with addressing how teachers interpret children’s behavior and the authors’ assertion that skillful observation and interpretation are at the root of quality teaching at all levels. But while working with children, a general principal should be kept in mind: to teach well one must understand their thinking. Ongoing observation and interpretation are the tools of formative assessment that provide teachers with a steady, if informal, source of information about what children truly understand. These authors believe this method can be more helpful than formal testing for the latter samples behavior only occasionally and usually fails to provide useful feedback to the teacher. The chapter authors provide detailed information on how to engage in this kind of assessment, with examples of theory presented and by offering the method they engage with teachers. This kind of approach deserves to be approached with all levels of students.

Chapter 24: Approaches to Portfolio Assessment of Reflection and Reflective Practice

In this chapter, editor Nona Lyons offers an introduction to some critical issues of portfolio assessment. The author focuses her attention on portfolio assessment because the portfolio has emerged today as the signature assessment model in national and international settings for diverse professions, including medicine, teacher education, nursing, occupational therapy, etc. Underpinning the new assessment of portfolio reflection is an interpretive conceptualization of approach to assessment in contrast to the standard, psychometric
approach. Both approaches are discussed along with issues of the validity of these approaches. A sociocultural view of the world of the classroom and of assessment also shapes the chapter. Moreover, this chapter also addresses those who want to understand how to teach reflection and how a portfolio can be a scaffold for that process.

Chapter 25: The Portfolio as a Tool for Sponsoring, Scaffolding, and Assessing Reflective Inquiry

In this chapter, Anne Rath offers a first-hand example of a portfolio development process at third level. She reports on her own teaching with compelling exemplars of her students first time encounters with reflection and a reflective portfolio process. Student responses, questionings, and frustrations are revealed as well as their victories in understanding reflection and its value in teaching. Rath reveals her own technique in teaching the complexities of reflection. The research she presents allows a reader to experience what the students experience and how they might be responded to.

Chapter 26: Ethical Dimensions of Reflective Inquiry

Author Nona Lyons suggests that the purpose of this chapter is to alert those engaged in reflective practice to the ethical considerations that may not be easily discernable, but are likely to be present and may need to be addressed. Four major concerns are identified for reflective practitioners, whether in national or international settings: professional considerations arising from being a professional engaged in reflection or reflective inquiry; general research considerations, a likely frequent occurrence for reflective practitioners engaging in inquiries; considerations from taking a critical inquiry stance, one being urgently suggested today; and, those “vexing critical issues,” that is, those situations professionals may encounter and be hard-pressed to try to solve. Lyons’ purpose is not to resolve any dilemmas. Rather it is to alert those engaged in reflective practice to the ethical considerations likely to be uncovered and to begin to consider how they might be addressed.