

RESPONDING TO THE CONTENT OF STUDENT  
WRITING: A CONSIDERATION OF AESTHETICS,  
ETHICS, VALUES, AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN ASSESSMENT

*Claudia Mitchell*, University of Prince  
Edward Island  
*Anne E. Cheverie*, Mount Saint Vincent  
University

Helping children to express their thoughts through writing brings into question not only the assessment of process and product, but also content and intention, particularly in terms of assessing values, ethics, and moral responsibility. Such considerations become increasingly significant in classrooms where writing is shared amongst peer audiences. Issues of sexism and racism, and sensitive subjects such as neglect, abuse, divorce, and suicide arise in successful writing programs where children feel free to write.

Using scenarios collected from teachers in Australia and Canada, we focused on assessing the content and intent of writing that teachers confront in their classrooms. We drew on research in ethics and aesthetics, moral development, censorship, gender studies, values in education, counselling, and student law in order to examine the content of student writing within the context of writing process curricula. We argued that the process has taken precedence over content.