



FINNISH NATIONAL
AGENCY FOR EDUCATION

Multilingualism and Identity Development in ECE Classrooms

Nancy L Commins
Clinical Professor Emeritus
University of Colorado Denver

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Monikielisyyden tukeminen-syysseminaari



GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How can ECE teachers support positive identity development in their classrooms?
- How can we collaborate with families to support students' identity and multilingualism in ECE??



Who Am I?

Professional

Activist

Educator

Dignity

Curiosity

Rewarding
Journey

Personal

Mother

Wife

Sister

Dog Lover

Reader

What is your own 6-word biography?

Context: The world is getting smaller

- Migration is a fact of life on every continent
- Instantaneous communication links us constantly with every part of the world
- Global economy depends on individuals who can work across languages and cultures



This means every language

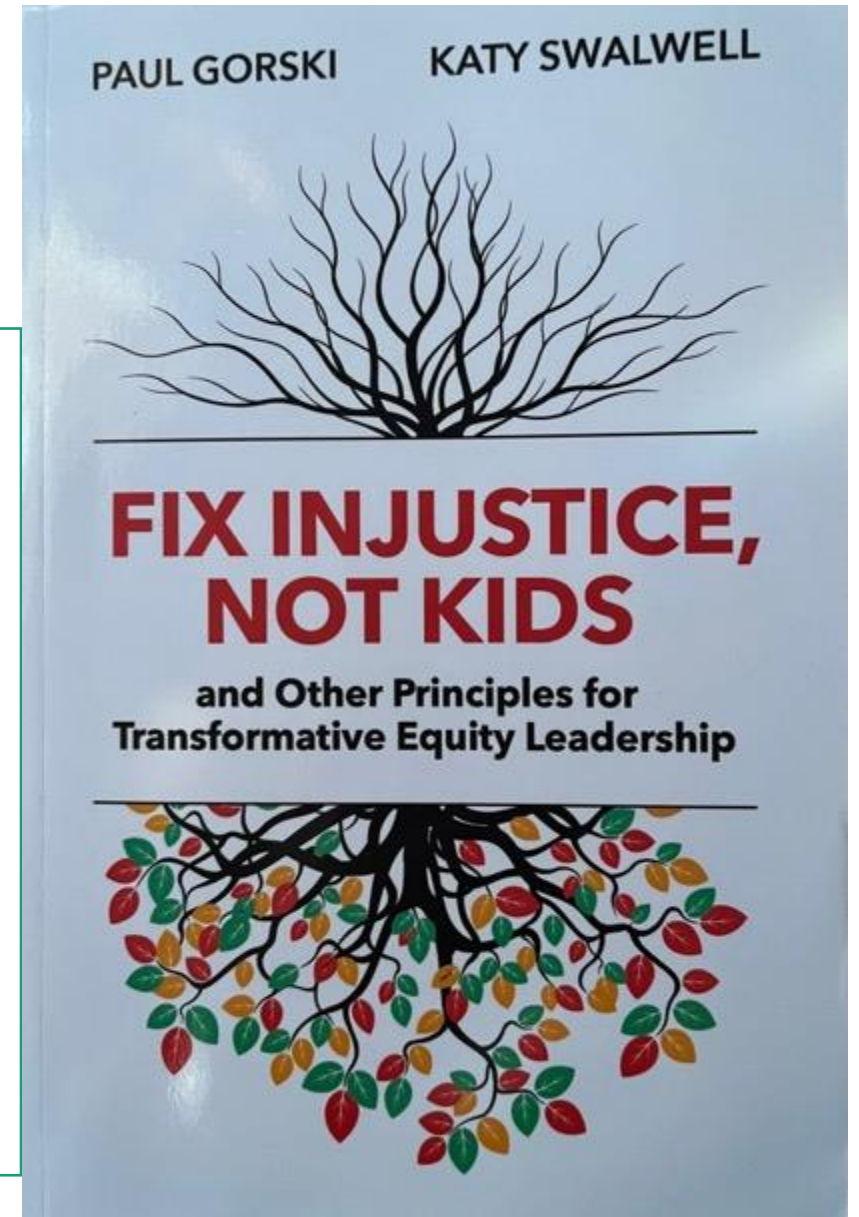
Diversity in Finland: Growing presence of Obvious Differences

Migrants' backgrounds:

- Ethnicities
- Skin Color
- Mother tongues
- Religions other than Lutheran

Teaching in a Stratified Society

- Nothing about teaching is neutral
- The dominant culture's values and interests frame our behaviors
- Schooling is a process of identity development that signals where you belong in the hierarchy of the society



Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

must be at the center
of all decision making





Every child deserves to attend a school where people care deeply about them and believe they have great potential to succeed.

THEME: The nature of teacher-student relationships is central to student learning

The way students are thought about and treated by society and consequently by the schools they attend and the educators who teach them is fundamental in creating academic success or failure. Nieto 1999, p.167



We send powerful
messages about the
worth of each student
through we do **and don't**
do.

Teachers' Actions Matter

The only thing truly within your control are the relationships you construct with and among your students

- You have the power to make students feel loved or unlovable - a part of the class family or an outsider.
- Every student has intrinsic worth and dignity simply for being human



Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

- Positive perspectives of parents and families
- Communication of high expectations
- Learning within the context of culture/culturally mediated instruction
- Student centered instruction
- Reshaping curriculum
- Teacher as facilitator

From The Brown University Education Alliance

What do these mean
Finland?

What is already in
place?

What needs to shift?

What happens when students and teachers with different identity profiles and cultural practices interact in schools?



Funds of Identity



- Race
- Ethnicity
- Language
- Gender Expression
- Ability
- Geography
- Sexual Orientation
- Social Class
- Size
- Age
- Religion
- Nationality

Possible Sources of Conflict

- Conventional age, gender, class roles
- Expected norms of conduct for different settings
- Nonverbal communication
- Proxemics
- Conceptions of time and punctuality
- Ways of expressing emotion
- Cooperation vs. Competition
- Concepts of Fairness
- Tone of Voice
- Etiquette
- Where to look when someone is angry

Students work out who they are
(and are not) within the constraints
of the institutions (physical and
virtual) where they spend time.

As their teacher,
you can only be who you are.

Whatever your identities, you can
help combat both actual & symbolic
violence



As teachers we can..

- Disrupt or perpetuate oppression and discrimination by how we treat our students
- Model for students how to we hope to be treated.
- Listen to what students and families want from us



Harmful Behaviors

- Othering
- Discounting
- Not Listening
- Making Invisible





Culturally responsive teaching includes topics, attitudes, strategies, **language**, and interactions.

This doesn't "just happen," it takes planning and collaboration among colleagues.

What happens when a feature of your identity
is marginalized in school?

from Louise & George Spindler (1993)

Enduring Self

Sense of continuity of experience, meaning & social identity

Situated Self

Contextualized changes to meet demands of the context

Endangered Self

Sustained violation of enduring self

STEPS TO TAKE

- Examine yourself re: power, privilege and difference
- Develop a critical stance
- Address and foster intercultural competence
- Develop an understanding of language acquisition

Messages to Guide Us

- We are in this together
- We all have something to learn and to teach
- There are different pathways towards understanding
- Multiple ways to express knowledge
- Anything you know or learn through one language or dialect can be expressed through any other

Language is more than Grammar.

Language, culture, and identity are deeply interconnected

Sociopolitical dimensions of language use and language education.

Sociolinguistic Consciousness. (Lucas & Villegas -2011)

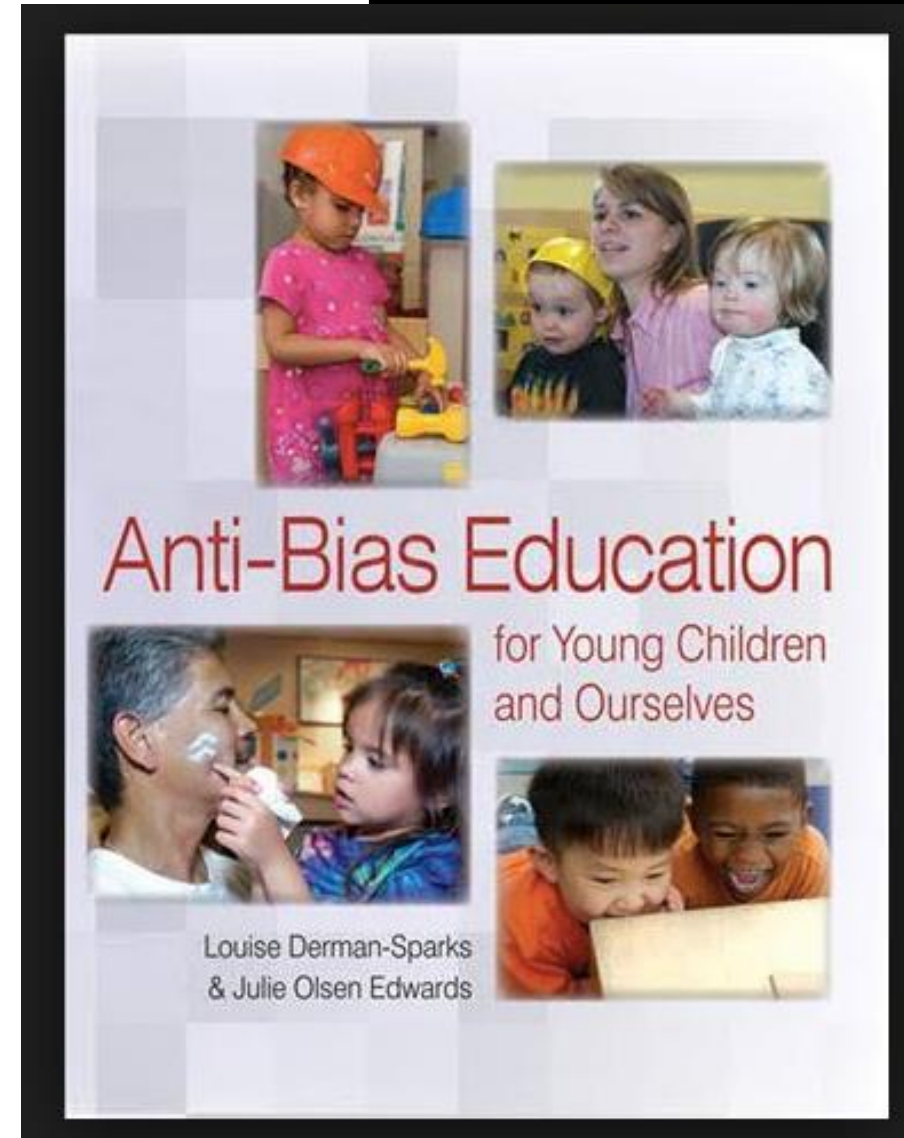
Asset Orientation to all Languages

All languages and dialects can do what each language can do

- Talk about the past, present and future
- Describe things
- Locate things in space
- Express emotion, opinion, fact or insinuate

All languages are languages for learning

at Culture, Language, & Fairness	
at Racial Identity & Fairness	77
at Gender Identity & Fairness	90
at Economic Class & Fairness	10
at Family Structures & Fairness	
at Different Abilities & Fairness	
at Holidays & Fairness	135



Messages from the U.S.

- Create a sense of belonging
- Make home visits to gain meaningful information
- Build trust, collaborative relationship with families

What is appropriate in the Finnish context?

What are you already doing?

Anti-bias education

.....[c]hildren live in a world that is not yet a place where all of them have equal opportunity to become all they could be.

We know **children need to feel safe and secure** in all their many identities, feel pride in their families, and feel at home in their early childhood programs.

We also know that **children need tools to navigate the complex issues** of identity, diversity, prejudice, and power in their daily lives so that they may learn thrive and succeed.

In successful ECE programs in the U.S.

Teachers know about:

- Developmentally appropriate practice
- First and second language acquisition
- Cultural competency

NAEYC Wanless & Crawford (2016)

Showing children that we see and value all aspects of them—including attributes related to race and culture [**and language**—is a critical step in helping them feel welcome and connected to their teachers and peers.

This means seeing their own cultural practices reflected in the materials, pictures and actions in the classroom

Louise Derman-Sparks:

Development of Racial Identity: 3 Key Stages

1. Around age two - begin to observe what she terms *socially prevailing stereotypes and biases*
 2. By age four try to reconcile observed differences between people, and negotiate why people are different from them.
 3. By age five - begin to make comparisons between racial groups.
 - Observing socioeconomic and institutional factors that affect different groups
 - these observations begin to weigh on their sense of self, and whatever group they belong to,
- From Kaylyn William's Capstone Stages in the Development of Racial Identity. pp. 11- 12

3 Approaches to Addressing Race / Difference

Color-blind
Color-aware
Social Justice

From, Reading Your Way to a
Culturally Responsive Classroom
Shannon B. Wanless, Patricia A.
Crawford (2016) NAEYC Resources /
Publications / Young Children

COLOR BLIND

- Common but ineffective
- Potentially harmful method

Adults do not directly talk about race with children, **yet the absence of an intentional message about race sends a powerful message in itself.**

Children are left to develop their own understandings about race, and if they ask questions, they may be met with adults declining to talk about race at school.

COLOR AWARE

- To be color aware is to intentionally teach children about race and tell them that we see and value their race because it is an important part of who they are.
- Adults in color-aware classrooms bring up race in direct and positive ways, take advantage of teachable moments, and respond to children's race-related questions and interactions with books and activities to advance the conversation.

This applies to all aspects of identity and difference

SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Considered ideal because it empowers children to play a role in acting against discrimination.
- Teachers using this approach to help children learn how to actively recognize and act on race-related injustices.
- Seek out teachable moments that specifically have to do with unfairness or discrimination,

Real life example: “Flesh colored” bandages

Suggest / help children write a letter to a company that makes the bandages to let them know that their products do not match all skin tones in their class.

Propose that the name or the colors should be changed.

- Key is to create safe interactive spaces
- Build community among all learners to strengthen both intercultural and academic skills



Helping Very Young Children Develop Intercultural Competence

...teaching practices may include helping children to develop positive racial identity, the ability to build relationships across races, and the awareness of race-related injustices and the inclination to take action to stop them

What does this mean in the Finnish context?

What can you do?

Durden, Escalante, & Blitch .2015 in NAEYC Wanless & Crawford (2016) p.

Messages to Families



In Multilingual Multicultural Schools

- Everyone has something to offer
- All experiences count
- Everyone is asked to participate / contribute
- Respect for the dignity of each person



What does this look like in the early childhood classroom?

Our Message to Children

We can all

Get along with

Care about

Learn from

Work with

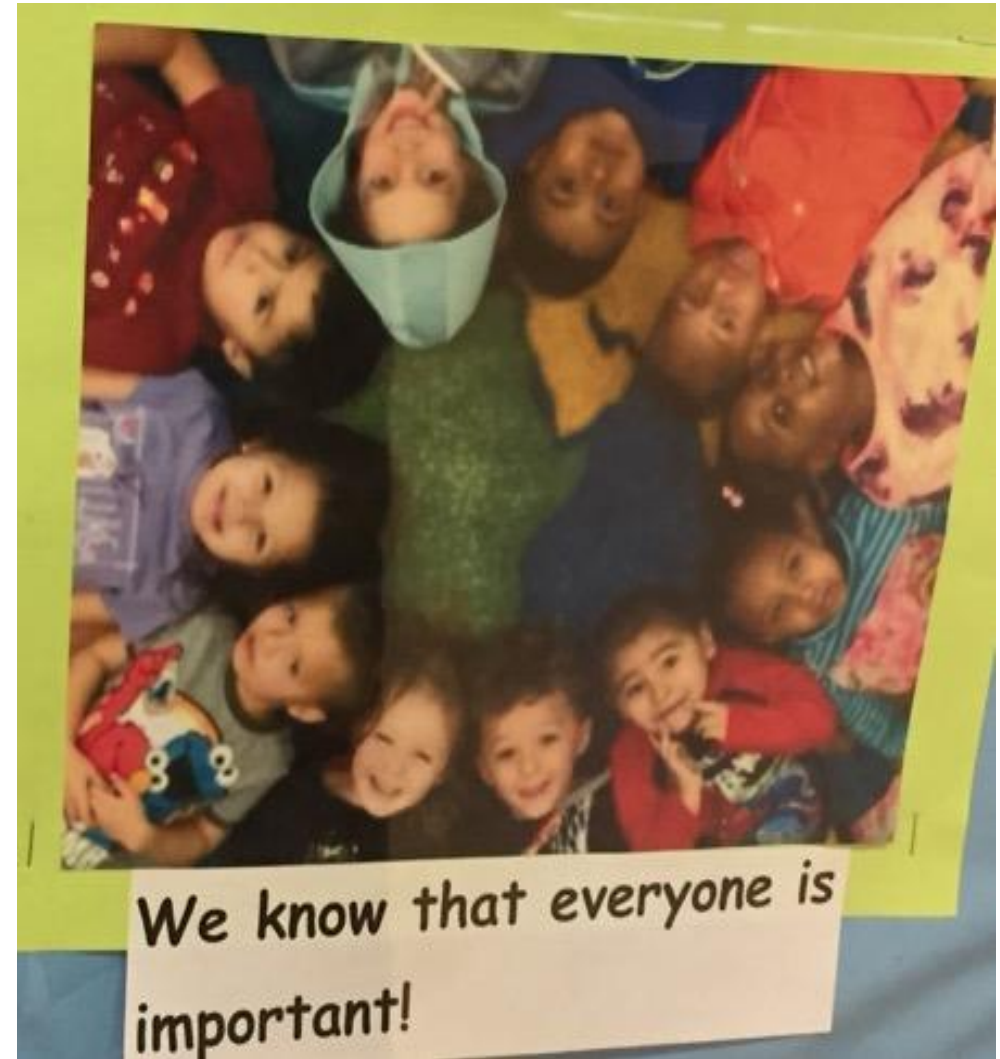
Advocate for

Respect

People different from ourselves



- We help students feel welcome and connected to all teachers and peers
- We show them we see and value their diversity
 - language, culture, gender expression, ability, etc.
- We integrate their identities into classroom materials, pictures and actions



What we can all do together

We honor all the different cultural groups represented in the school -- including native born, Finnish or Swedish mother tongue speakers

As a staff we learn more about the cultural backgrounds of our families

We welcome your input and invite you to share with us and the children your cultural practices.



We are Proactive About Prejudice

- Respect the dignity of each and every student
- Do not accept any kind of name calling or bullying of anyone by anyone.
- Participate in programs that promote acceptance of differences and are explicitly anti racist.
- Are life-long learners regarding multiculturalism and equity

We Celebrate Multilingualism

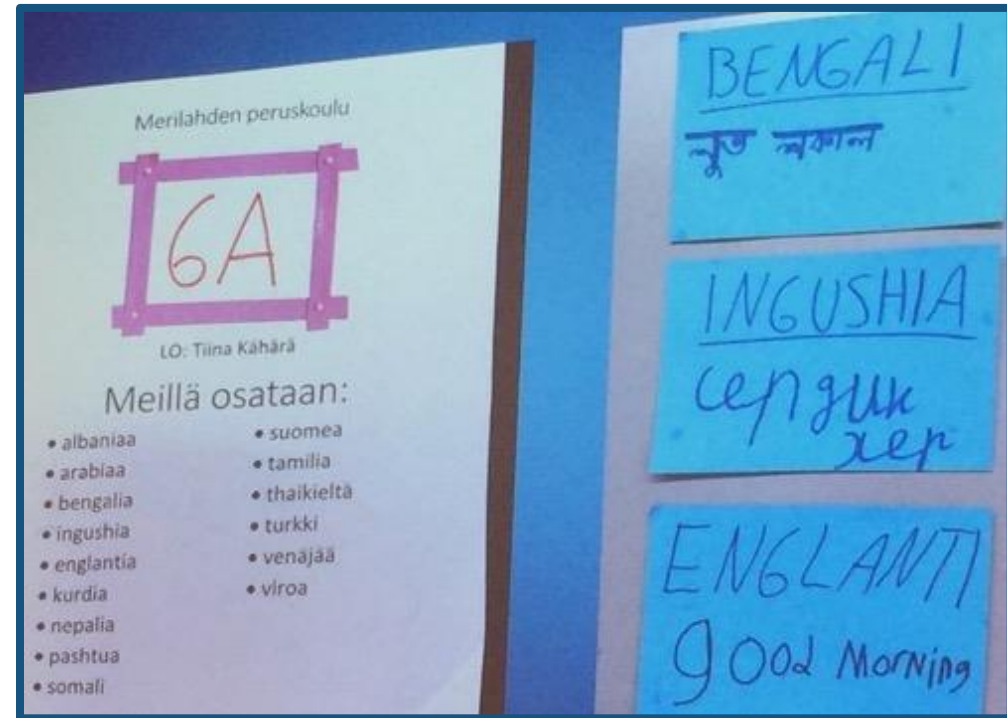


- Talk to children about the gift of bilingualism / multilingualism.
- Emphasize that all languages are languages for learning.
- Tell children - anything you know in one language you can learn to express in another.

The more languages the better

Affirm Students' Home Languages

We encourage you as parents and family members to interact and communicate with your children in your strongest language.



REASSURE PARENTS

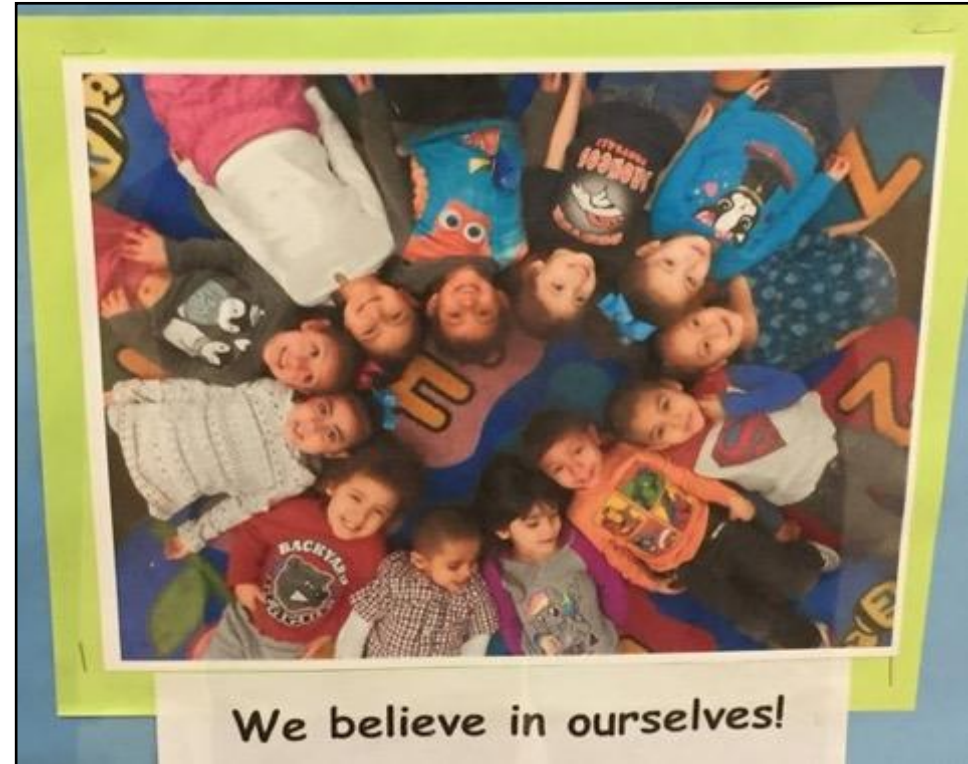
What a child learns in one language will help them to learn in the other.

Their role is to deepen conceptual understandings based on your own ways of knowing.

Value the Students' Cultures



We do this work for them..



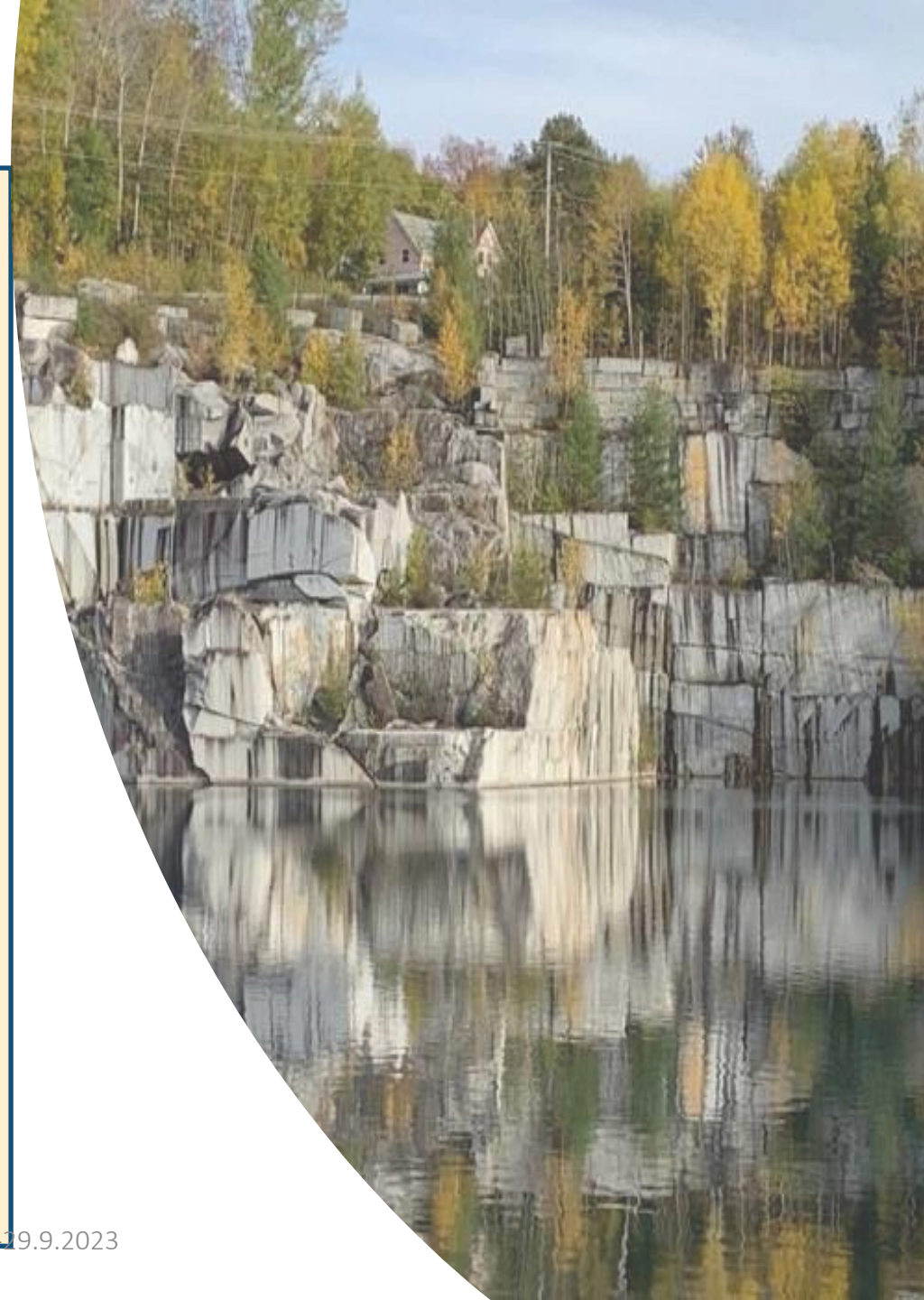
And they deserve our best

Final Reflection

What stands out to you from the presentation?

What new understandings do you have about language and identity?

How can you use this information in your work?





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Danke Thank you شكراً
Merci Gracias Tak
Հնրհակալեմ
KIITOS

Nancy.Commins@ucdenver.edu