Strategies for Learning about the Languages and Cultures of Families, Colleagues, and Communities

Families:
- Cooking Classes: Invite families to teach their favorite recipes to one another, staff, or school-age children. This can be a fun social event for families to meet one another and share a meal.
- Language Classes: If you can, encourage family groups to use the program space after hours for language classes. They can build community and share language resources. They may also be willing to be conversation partners with youth who are taking world language classes in school.

Colleagues:
- Staff Room Map: Post a map of the world in the staff room or program lobby. Use pushpins or stickers to mark the locations where staff or families have lived. This can become a resource for staff and families.
- Staff Field Trips: Provide incentives for new language experiences. Take a group trip to a local ethnic restaurant and get to know the owner.
- Learning Breaks: Post a list of free apps or resources in the staff room. Staff may like News in Slow (iTunes store; available in a variety of languages), Slow Chinese (transcripts available in English and Chinese characters), or Yes Japan (audio and video).
- Name Quilts: Encourage staff members to create their own name quilt piece on construction paper or fabric. Each person should include their preferred names, drawings to represent important people and places in their lives, and anything else that helps express who they are. Display the pieces together in a staff space. Be sure to make one yourself.
- Break Room Q&A: Post interesting questions in the staff room. Occasionally post a “word of the day” in a world language. Provide a small reward (shout-out in an email, fun badge) to the staff member who correctly translates the word or phrase.

Communities:
- Community Mapping: Spend time getting to know the cultural resources available around your home or workplace. Make a map (hand-drawn or on the computer) to represent your area's cultural and language communities and resources like libraries, community agencies, museums, places of worship, schools, etc.
- Story Telling: Invite members of the community to come share their stories with you, children, and youth. This can be a powerful way to learn about your community's history. Be intentional about inviting people from a variety of backgrounds, ages, and experiences. Stories can be simple and about any number of experiences: moving to the area, memories of starting middle school, learning English in school, etc. Visit the Story Corps website for samples and ideas: https://storycorps.org.
• International Films: Look for international movies, plays, or events. Small theaters, local colleges, or other venues may show international movies with English subtitles. Go see a show. You may discover a group of native speakers eager to share their language with others.

• Cultural Festivals: Many cultural groups in the United States sponsor festivals that are open to the community. Look for a calendar of local community events at your local library or community center. Look online to see whether cultural centers, museums, or places of worship have a calendar of public festivals. This can be a great way to learn about the language and culture of recent and historic immigrants to your area.

• Sister Cities: Investigate whether your current hometown has a sister city relationship with any international cities. Some cities have multiple sister cities. Reach out to your city government to learn about opportunities to connect with the sister city. This may be an easy way to find digital pen pals for children and youth at a school overseas.