World Language Day Activities: Grades 3-5

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ACTIVITY 1: Interpreting an Infographic

Goal
- Students will learn about the diverse languages and cultures of New York City students by analyzing an infographic – a document with visuals graphics, representing the top 10 languages spoken and taught in New York City Public Schools.
- Students will use the data to make observations, inferences, and develop questions for further exploration as they engage in the World Language Day.

Materials
- “How Global is NYCDOE?” Infographic, found in your Google Classroom folder
- Graphic organizer (see below)

Activity Overview

Explore
Use the guiding questions included in the graphic organizer below to study the information presented in the “How Global is NYCDOE?” infographic:

Graphic Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you notice in the infographic?</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
The “How Global is NYCDOE?” infographic shows the diverse languages and cultures in New York City classrooms and homes. The many languages and cultures in our communities make our New York City Public Schools vibrant and rich learning environments. Here are two questions to think about as you look at the infographic:

- What are 2-3 benefits of being in diverse classrooms, homes and communities?
- What are some challenges of being in diverse classrooms, homes and communities?
Apply
Now that you identified 2-3 benefits of being part of diverse classrooms, homes and communities, how do you think communities can use these benefits to address the challenges that you have identified?

Reflect, Share
- Sum it up! List 2-3 words that represent the main idea of the infographic. Then, write a one-sentence summary of this infographic using these words. Share your one-sentence summary with a family member or friend.
- Compare this infographic to your own classroom or neighborhood. Discuss with a family member or friend.

Extend
- Learn more about the languages represented in the infographic. Which countries and regions speak these languages?
- Research the questions that you come up with after reviewing the infographic.
ACTIVITY 2: Our Words, Our World

Goal

- You will become a detective to investigate about your home language(s) and cultural traditions and those of your peers.
- You will write a report that reflects your investigation findings.

Materials

- Paper, pencil or pen
- Telephone

Activity Overview

Explore

Read the following text:

**Language, the Greatest Invention of Mankind** by Dionisio Rodriguez, Division of Multilingual Leaders, NYDOE

Have you ever thought about the language you speak? Language is the greatest invention of mankind. It helps to define us as humans and it serves to connect us as a community. The first language you learn is your home language. It is the language with which you communicate with your family. It is also the first connection that you make with yourself as a person, with your friends, and with your cultural traditions.

As a member of a community we call New York City, you certainly need English to succeed in school and in life. Yet, you should not forget about learning other languages well, whether it is your home language or another very different language. A person who speaks more than one language has more opportunities to study, to travel, and eventually to be employed. Being bilingual or trilingual helps you to prepare for the global community we live in and for the jobs of the future.

Explain

Use the knowledge you gained from reading the text to learn more about world languages and why they matter in our community. You will expand your knowledge by interviewing family members and peers to learn about their family history as it relates to their home language and cultural traditions. After these interviews, you will write a short report explaining your findings.

Apply

As we celebrate World Languages Day, you will become a detective and investigate about your family home language(s) and culture in a fun way. So be ready to become an investigating reporter!

**Step 1:** Interview various family members to learn more about your own language and cultural history. Grandparents usually seem to know a lot about family history!

- You create your own questions or asking the following ones:
  - Have we always lived in New York City? Where did our family live originally?
Do you speak a language besides English? What is it?

Is there a language that we call “home language”? When do we speak this language? Do we reserve it for specific occasions? If so, what kind of occasions?

If you usually do not speak your original home language, what is the language that you usually speak? Why?

Do you think that knowing more than one language is helpful? How?

When you think of our own family culture, is there a tradition that is important to you?

Step 2: Then, call or connect with a friend who speaks a different home language than yours. Ask them the same questions. Maybe they can ask an older family member to help you!

Step 3: Now, put your investigator cap and study the information you collected. We usually call this “data.”

- What did you find out? What does the data that you collected suggest?
- Were your friend’s experiences with language and cultures similar or different from yours? Explain.
- Is there a pattern in the experiences of the people you interviewed?
- Do you have a theory or idea as to why there is a pattern or why there is not a pattern? Explain.
- Since you interviewed people from different generations (for example, a sibling, your parents, your grandparents):
  - What did you notice regarding their attitude toward language learning? How has the use of home language and culture changed from generation to generation? What do you think is the reason for that?
  - Create a hypothesis (meaning, your own explanation/conclusion).

Step 4: Reconnect with the friends you interviewed. Share a favorite family activity or tradition with them. Ask them if they feel comfortable sharing one of their traditions with you.

Reflect, Share

You have worked hard on this investigation! It is time now to put all your data together using and write 1-2 paragraphs that explain what you have uncovered.

- What have you learned from this investigation that is unique and new to you? What big lessons have you learned? Share it with everybody that has assisted you in this investigation!

Extend

Don’t forget to celebrate. It’s World Languages Day!
ACTIVITY 3: Culture, Customs, and Cuisine!

Goal

- Students will explore and learn about a country’s culture and cuisine, comparing it to their own home culture and cuisine.
- Students will engage in a cooking adventure by identifying a cold dish from the country they chose to explore and make it with their family for dinner.

Materials

- A computer or cell phone
- All Recipes website
- African Beef Stew recipe
- Museum Virtual Tours
- Google Earth
- Note: If internet is not available, students can use a pencil; color markers and/or crayons; construction paper or regular paper.

Activity Overview

Explore

 Invite your peers to form remote study groups and work together to learn about the language, culture, cuisine, and customs of a country of your choice by visiting some of the websites listed above (e.g., Museum Virtual Tours; All Recipes and World Cuisine). If internet is not available, form a family study group. The study group can decide how to divide the work.

- Good Tip: some members of the group can investigate the language, cuisine and neighboring countries, while others may research dancing, music, customs, expressions, etc.

Now, compare your findings about the country you are investigating with what you know about your home country:

- What are some similarities? What are some differences?
- What is the preferred language spoken in households in the country the group is investigating?
- What are some of the traditional dishes from their cuisine? For people visiting this country, what cold food should they try?

Explain

Now, go through the list of cold food in the cuisine of the country you are studying and select one of these choices for you to try to make it with your family for dinner. You can do this by visiting the world cuisine websites (All Recipes website and African Beef Stew recipe). What is the name of this dish in the language spoken in that country? What is the food called in your home language?

- Note: If internet is not available, you can call a classmate, a family friend or a trusted neighbor that was not born in the United States of America, and inquire about their country’s language, culture and cuisine. Ask them for a recipe for a cold dish and try to make it with an adult family member for dinner.
When you are done, draw a collection of everything you learned about the country's language, culture and cuisine. Use many colors! You can also write a poem or a song or journal entry with your findings.

**Apply**

Now that you and your study group know a lot about this country, let’s pretend you are planning to open a travel agency and become virtual tour guides to people interested in traveling to that country.

- What would you inform your customers about that country’s language, costumes and cuisine?
- What food should they try? How would you describe this food in that country’s language or in your customers’ own languages?

**Reflect, Share**

Choose a time to call a classmate and talk about the country, its language, costumes and cuisine. Share the main similarities and differences with the language, costumes, and cuisine of your own community in New York City.

**Extend**

Don’t forget to celebrate. It’s World Languages Day! Try learning new phrases used in the cultures you learned about with the games at [Digital Dialects](https://digitaldialects.org).
ACTIVITY 4: The Tree of Me

Goal

- You will explore your own home languages, cultures, and heritage as important resources in our communities and in the world.
- You will make connections, apply what you have learned and reflect upon the role of your home language and your new languages in shaping who you are.

Materials

- Tree of Languages at https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-languages-evolve-alex-gendler#watch
- “Why I Taught myself 20 languages – and What I Learned about Myself in the Process”
- Tree of Me Chart

Activity Overview

Explore

Let’s explore the Tree of Languages: How Languages Change and Evolve at https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-languages-evolve-alex-gendler#watch!

Tip: Even though the video is narrated in English, you can have subtitles in your own language or in a language of your choice. Just go to settings and make a language choice (for example, your home language or a language that you would like to explore today).

Invite a family member to watch the video with you, and then answer the following question together:

- What are the advantages of the linguistic and cultural diversity in New York City and in the world?

Note: If the internet is not available, ask your parents or someone else at home to talk to you about the origins of your home language. Where do they think it comes from? You can also use the information shared in the infographic to learn more about your own home language and its representation in New York City.

Explain

Read an excerpt for the text, “Why I Taught myself 20 languages – and What I Learned about Myself in the Process” by Timothy Doner at TED-Ed.¹

Why I Taught myself 20 languages – and What I Learned about Myself in the Process by Timothy Doner

When I was beginning to discover languages, I had a romanticized view of words like “speak” and “fluency”. But then I realized that you can be nominally fluent in a language and still struggle to understand parts of it. English is my first language, but what I really spoke was a hybrid of teenage slang and Manhattan-ese. When I listen to my father, a lawyer, talk to other lawyers, his words sound as foreign to me as Finnish. I certainly couldn’t read Shakespeare without a dictionary, and I’d be equally helpless in a room with Jamaicans or Cajuns. Yet all of us speak English...

¹ This excerpt was retrieved from the TED-Ed Blog on April 6, 2020.
Language is a complex tapestry of trade, conquest and culture to which we each add our own unique piece... (While) I’ve come to realize I’ll never be fluent in 20 languages, I’ve also understood that language is about being able to converse with people, to see beyond cultural boundaries and find a shared humanity. And that’s a lesson well worth learning.

Now, answer the questions below by yourself or with a family member:

- Explain what the author means by saying, “Language is a complex tapestry of trade, conquest and culture to which we each add our own unique piece.”
- What did the author learn about himself and others as he learned other languages?

Apply

Apply today’s learning by completing the “Tree of Me” project. Use a piece of paper to draw a tree that captures your story, which is also the story of your own family, the language(s) spoken in the family, and some of your traditions.

“Tree of Me” Project

1. To build the “Tree of Me,” you can choose to draw a type of tree that brings you close to your own home language or your language of heritage!
2. Each piece of information can be a part of the tree or one of the flowers or fruits produced by the tree.
3. Here is the information that you may include in your “Tree of Me”:
   - Your name as the base/ground of the tree
   - Your home language and other languages as the roots of your tree;
   - Add a trunk that includes the names of your parents or guardians
   - Add branches with the names of as many family members as you can (for example, grandparents, relatives)
   - Add leaves that include the names of costumes and traditions in your family. Use the home language
   - Add fruits that include the names of new traditions that your family learned from other cultures or from the community you live in here in New York City
   - Add flowers with words that represent your family’s traits in your home language or in a language that you explore today

Reflect, Share

Reflect on what you have learned about your own home language or a new language you may be learning and their connections to your personal identity by considering the following question:

- Why is it important to preserve our own home language(s) and traditions? How can we enrich our own home language(s) and traditions by embracing the diversity in our communities in New York City?

Extend

Connect with one of your classmates and share your own family story, if you feel comfortable. Ask your classmate if they would like to share their family story with you.

More importantly, don’t forget to celebrate... It’s World Languages Day!