Strategies to Prepare for the IUHPFL Experience

New experiences and unfamiliar situations happen every day during the program. The better prepared participants are, the more confidently they will be able to navigate these experiences. Below are a few suggested strategies to improve proficiency in the target language and help prepare students for some of the cultural challenges that lie ahead. To improve language proficiency:

1. Participate in a Language Club in your school.
2. Participate in a community conversation group in the target language.
3. Label items around the house.
4. Watch movies & listen to music in the target language.
5. Read books in the target language.
6. Arrange for a language exchange with a native speaker.
7. Change the settings on your cell phone and computer so that the display language is your target language.

Upon arrival at the program site, students will experience different family and friends, different instructors, different city, different culture, and a different language. We highly recommend that participants prepare for this amount of change by getting out of their comfort zone before departure. Some suggestions to ease cultural adjustment:

1. Research the city/region where you will be spending the summer.
2. Try new foods. Many cultures demonstrate caring through food; refusing to try a meal that has been prepared for you can be very offensive to your host family.
3. Stay at a friend’s home for an extended period (3 days to a week). Note the ways that the routine and expectations are different from your own home.
4. Go without your cell phone and/or social media for an extended period (3 days to a week—or more!).
5. Consider your routines—whatever it is that you do or eat regularly, places that you often go, even driving routes that you frequent. Recognize these patterns and challenge them!