

Best Practices when Communicating Across Cultures

Robert Kohls (1927-2006), cultural author and former director of training for the U.S. Information Agency and Meridian International Center in Washington, D.C., sought to improve understanding of other cultures. Through his work and best known book *Survival Kit for Overseas Living (2001)* he identified qualities that many diversity experts believe are important when communicating across cultures.

- Being non-judgmental
- Being Flexible
- Listening and Observing
- Being aware of one's own culture
- Being aware of stereotypes
- Being persistent
- Respecting other cultures
- Being aware of one's own limitation
- Learning from interacting
- Communicating effectively
- Practicing Empathy
- Tolerating ambiguity
- To adjust based on others' reactions



The demographics of today's schools point to a shift in the social and cultural landscape of American education. Thus it is imperative that we consider and develop strategies for the inclusion of all learners regardless of their background. With the list above provided take a few minutes and complete the following:

1. Put an "S" beside those qualities that could be applied to a school setting, now.
2. Circle the top three qualities that you feel are the most important to a physical education setting. (Over)

3. Star the one quality that you feel is the most difficult to perform on a daily basis.

After you have completed these tasks, find a group of no more than 3-4 people to discuss your selections. First, each person should discuss the most important practice they chose and why they selected it. Next, identify the most difficult practice and why they chose it.

If time permits, pick one quality/practice out of your selection and discuss in your group ways that we could prepare preservice physical education teachers.

Original document inspired by: Kohls, L. R. (2001). *Survival kit for overseas living*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.