Interaction is defined as a mutual or reciprocal action or exchange. To interact is to act together towards others or with others. Interactions are a key component of professionalism. As an educator, you will constantly be interacting with a variety of people in many different ways. Before we begin our study of professional interactions, let’s take a look at some different examples of interactions that took place in the famous 1938 chartbuster, The Wizard of Oz.

Think back to the memorable interaction that took place at the beginning of the movie between Auntie Dorothy’s Auntie Em and the neighbor woman who turned out to be the wicked witch of the west. The witch was furious with Auntie Em for allowing Dorothy’s dog Toto to run free on the dirt path. She verbally attached Auntie Em by threatening, “I’ll get you my pretty, and your little dog too!”

How effective was this form of communication?

Now let’s recall the interaction that Dorothy had with the Tinman as they made their first acquaintance with each other. Although the Tinman was a strange character in Dorothy’s eyes, she attempted to understand the predicament that plagued the poor man as his joints were rusted, making him unable to move about freely.

Rather than displaying signs of judgment, she graciously grabbed his oil can and helped to bring his body back to life.

What would have happened to the poor Tinman if Dorothy had not accepted him for what he was?

And finally, remember that each of the four main characters on Dorothy’s dream was lacking a life necessity – a brain, courage, a heart and a home. On their tumultuous journey to the Land of Oz, they worked together, supporting each other through the quest to find what they needed.

What would have come of the Scarecrow, the Lion, the Tinman and Dorothy if the four had not collaborated?

In terms of communication, it has been found that an effective teacher must be able to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and coherently in both writing and speaking. Demonstrating conventions of standard written and spoken English is an essential skill which teachers must hone.

Being that the world is now filled with communication devices such as text messaging, instant messaging, and tweeting, one might be tempted to use brief forms and informal language. However, regardless of with whom the teacher is communicating and which mode of communication is being used, formal Standard English must remain constant.
Slide 9  Additionally, teachers should always keep their audience in mind, and should adjust their language accordingly. A skilled teacher has the added responsibility of communicating effectively not only with the students but also with parents, colleagues and the community.

Slide 10  The fortune teller in Kansas listened very carefully and actively to Dorothy so that later, in the Land of Oz, he could use the information she shared with him. In order to interact professionally, one must be willing to actively listen and respond thoughtfully to ideas and perspectives of others including students, colleagues, administration, parents and the community. Sometimes the day becomes so hectic that we often do not take the time to actively listen to others. Careful listening is one of the most effective ways to influence others. In order to listen actively, one must pay attention to the speaker’s tone, inflection, feelings and body language. This shows respect to the speaker and helps the listener understand the message. This active listening and responding requires the listener to maintain a culturally responsive attitude toward all involved parties. The teacher must demonstrate diplomacy, tact and sensitivity toward the feelings and opinions of others. In addition, it is extremely important to demonstrate awareness of the impact of one’s own words and actions on students. This can be done by monitoring and adjusting personal behavior accordingly.

Slide 11  Another area of professional interactions is the contributions that are made to the profession. As a student in the area of education, one is exposed to many of the most recent and updated research findings in terms of technology, brain information, teaching techniques and strategies. The school systems depend on the teaching candidates and beginning teachers to share this information with those who have been in the field longer.

Slide 12  In addition, teaching candidates and beginning teachers often have a fresh enthusiasm that comes with being up on the latest information. Such professionals must be willing to share these current thoughts and ideas with others while accepting helpful materials and ideas in return. At the same time, it is important to be able to function in a group setting where each member contributes actively.

Slide 13  Being familiar with the school’s mission, philosophy and goals will enable you to focus your attention on the issues that are most important to the students and the school as a whole. Remember that without the scarecrow’s brain, the tinman’s heart and the lion’s courage, the team probably would not have made it to the Land of Oz. It is important to keep in mind that each member of a group has strengths and should contribute accordingly.

Slide 14  What is a life-long learner? He or she is one who continuously seeks out opportunities to grow and change. A successful teacher must be a life-long learner. In order to continually grow both professionally and personally, it is important for students, teacher candidates, beginning teachers and seasoned teachers to take part in professional clubs and organizations which will enable the professional to be aware of the most recent research, news and issues in the field.

Slide 15  It is said that knowledge is power and this is one of the ways to gain that power. Once in the field, teachers should seek out professional development opportunities that will ensure
continued growth. Other ways of growing professionally are to work on obtaining National Board Certification and/or advanced degrees in the area of education.

Slide 16  A growing professional takes the time to self-reflect and to seek input from other professionals regarding his or her teaching. Constructive criticism should be accepted and measures should be taken to improve in areas of weakness. Even Oz realized that he could not stay stagnant behind that curtain. By the end of the movie, he was soaring to higher places!

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