A Regular Meeting of the Governing Board of the Apache Junction Unified School District #43 was called to order at 8:45 a.m. at the Apache Junction Unified School District Board Room, 1575 W. Southern Avenue, Apache Junction, AZ. President Ehrlich led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board members in attendance were Jodi Ehrlich, Dena Kimble, Cami Garcia, Christa Rizzi, and Michael Weaver (arrived at 9:15 a.m.)

Communication:
Thanks to everybody who came in to get your pictures taken. I can see this is not a usual activity in Apache Junction. This will give us the opportunity to show who we are with professional photographs. They can be used when you are recognized for your accomplishments and also for the Board’s accomplishments. I also want to thank Duke’s Photography Studios for providing this service at no charge.

Dr. Anderson goes over the Board agreement to take collective ownership, but still focus on students.
- This is a “we” thing, we are all in this together.
- Board room communications. I received a phone call about why we are holding board meetings on the same night as the city council meetings and why we are charging $1,500 to the teachers leaving. After about a half hour of questions and answers they understood, but commented that “this is now the way it was explained to me.” We need to look at the questions we ask, and answers we give in the board meetings to ensure that the public understands what we are doing and that we are spending the right amount of time on the right agenda items. We have an opportunity to identify areas we want to get out to the public and then write and submit articles to the papers. One thing we could look at is volunteerism and tie it to our parents and retirement communities. We need to get our message out.
- Assume positive commitment to students, ask for clarification if something falls off, but begin with a positive assumption. People have a good intent. No one got into education to do harm to kids. We must maintain a good assumption. They want us to be successful with their kids.
- Take care of yourself and stay engaged. Take breaks if you need them and be mindful of technology use during the meetings. Make space for thinking and processing. Go around the room and give everybody a chance to speak. The earlier we can give you information is also key. Are we giving you the right or enough information to prepare for the meeting? We need to ask a question when we don’t know the answers even if it makes the meetings run longer. We also need to make sure we ask the right questions during the board meetings so we get the information out to the public even if we already know the answers.
- We need to be comfortable enough with each other that we can express our opinions without the others taking it personally. We need to let everybody be themselves. We are all different and we have to build the trust and it is ok to disagree. We need to respect each other’s opinions even when we don’t agree with them. When we make a decision we need to think, “is it in the best interest of the child, the student, and the district? How is it going to affect the students and the district?”
- Laughing is good. We don’t laugh enough. We need to unwind a little because we are all so serious.
- Listen openly and respect the opinions of others, even if they are different, hear them out. Sometimes we talk over each other and don’t let people finish expressing themselves. Going in an
orderly manner will help instead of people jump in and by keeping order with Jodi directing will help. When we are in executive session you might say “is there anyone else who has something to say.” That might help before the rebuttal.

- Respect the process. We all need to understand the process in order to respect it. We need to include an opportunity for discussion prior to voting. If you vote against the majority and explain your reasons, it is not disrespecting the process. It is disrespecting the process if a decision is made and you go out and bash the rest of the board afterward. Social media can be very ugly or it can be a tool to use. The idea is that you support a decision once the vote is taken. The goal is to reach consensus which does not mean everybody agrees. The chance to explain your vote is during the discussion prior to the vote. When we walk out of the room it should be the end of it. You support the decision of the board when you step off that podium. This is the decision the board made and I support the process. If we had the board meeting recorded and accessible to the public on our website we could direct them to view the recording or read the minutes.

Board Agreements: The purpose of the meeting is to strengthen the relationship between Governing Board members and District leadership. The District goal is to create a strong partnership that is focused on improving the organization.

The Board and the CEO: Seven Practices to protect your Organization’s Most Important Relationship:

- Mission, Not Ego
  - Evaluate your organization’s mission statement. Developing a clear, concise mission statement is integral to organizational health and staying on track. Ensure that your mission statement focuses on what you do, who you do it for, and how or why you do it.
  - Some boards open each meeting with a reading of their organization’s mission statement, as one small way to bring proper perspective, regularly reorienting each person to the ultimate purpose of their efforts. Others intentionally incorporate impact stories to focus the conversation on the people served.

- Clarity, Not Confusion
  - Create a board manual, listing internal or external resources to articulate the district roles and responsibilities of the Board members and the CEO.

- Consistent Communication, Not Mystery
  - Schedule a recurring weekly or bi-weekly meeting (or report) between the CEO and the board president. Ensure that the CEO communicates directly with each board member regularly.
  - At least monthly, the CEO should send an email to the entire board with an update on strategic plan objectives, as well as brief highlights of successes, challenges, and goals for the month to come.

- Accountability, Not Platitudes
  - Schedule annual performance assessments for the CEO. Include in this assessment space to assess performance against annual goals and a time for a conversation about areas for improvement.

- Healthy Conflict, Not Kumbaya
  - Schedule time for social connection in the margins of regular board meetings.
  - Encourage boards to conduct an annual employee survey so that the board can learn early of any significant problems or decline in staff morale. Conducting the survey via an outside may help employee anonymity.

- Prepared, Not Panicked
  - Update the CEO’s job description annually.
  - Create a list of skills and expertise needed on your board.

- Involved, Not Detached
  - Ask each board member to create a list of five potential donors each year for the organization’s financial success.
Send out board meeting agendas and materials ahead of the meeting to give board members enough time to prepare. During the meeting, ensure that each member participates and offers his or her expertise, especially on the subjects that they know the best.

Dr. Anderson showed a PowerPoint on “The Ladder of Inference”. The Ladder of Inference describes the thinking process that we go through, usually without realizing it, to get from a fact to a decision or action. The thinking stages can be seen as rungs on a ladder and are show in the image.

Staring at the bottom of the ladder, we have reality and facts. From there, we:

- Experience these selectively based on our beliefs and prior experience
- Interpret what they mean
- Apply our existing assumptions, sometimes without considering them
- Draw conclusions based on the interpreted facts and our assumptions
- Develop beliefs based on these conclusions
- Take actions that seem “right” because they are based on what we believe

This can create a vicious cycle. Our beliefs have a big effect on how we select from reality, and can lead us to ignore the facts altogether. Soon we are literally jumping to conclusions – by missing facts and skipping steps in the reasoning process.

By using the Ladder of Interference, you can learn to get back to the facts and use your beliefs and experiences to positive effect, rather than allowing it to narrow your field of judgment.

Lunch recess: 11:30

Retreat reconvened at 12:00 p.m.

Governing Board Meetings/Agenda: Dr. Anderson created a Google doc for board members to add item(s) for the upcoming Governing Board meetings.

We are looking into switching to BoardDocs to have a user-friendly approach to paperless board meetings. The cost for the BoardDocs LT is $1,000 for a one time initial/set-up fee plus an annual maintenance fee of $2,700.

Governing Board Goals: Dr. Anderson asked the Board to prioritize their goals from Zero -6 months, six-twelve months, and one-three years.

For the Zero – Six Months:

✓ Mrs. Ehrlich, Mrs. Kimble, and Mr. Weaver choose Money and Budgeting, make a Board decision about the sale of property, and create a timeline for these decisions for each potential sale.
✓ Mrs. Garcia’s priority is Programming – Enhance college prep opportunities for students who are not currently on that trajectory.
✓ Mrs. Rizzi priority is Board development processes refined.

At 3:25 p.m., the work/study session adjourned.
Respectfully submitted by:
Edna Goff, Board Secretary
August 8, 2017

APPROVED BY THE BOARD:

[Signatures and titles]

President
Vice-President
Member
Member
Member