

## Bernard stepping down from top union post

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 16 June 2017 03:40

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### MCFUSE head to remain member

Brian Bernard, the president of the McKinley Federation of United School Employees, no longer holds the top title with the union that represents dozens of employees at Gallup-McKinley County Schools, according to a May 20 letter given by Bernard to the MCFUSE executive council and shared with Gallup Interim Schools Superintendent Mike Hyatt.

The one-page letter is not a resignation letter, but notification that Bernard, originally from Wyoming, wants to maintain union membership — but not as its president.

“Throughout my tenure as president, MCFUSE has had impressive accomplishments, being very successful in our efforts to defend education, represent and service the bargaining unit and members and support our students,” Bernard wrote. “MCFUSE can be very proud of its professional and collaborative relationship with Gallup-McKinley County Schools.”

Bernard, union president for nearly ten years, said the organization now has to select a new leader. He said he’s leaving the group not out of a sense of dismay or frustration, but to serve MCFUSE in a different capacity.

“Although a volunteer job, this is like a regular full-time job,” Bernard said. Bernard is a career school district employee, with Spanish language teaching stints at Gallup High School and, most recently, Miyamura High School. “While MCFUSE never seems to get the credit or

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recognition that it's due, especially in day-to-day personnel issues — rest assured that MCFUSE has fought the good fight and brought balance and stability to Gallup-McKinley Schools.”

Bernard said he's proud of various union accomplishments over the years, among them:

A \$2 million SIG grant for Crownpoint High School in 2010.

The addition of Navajo Sovereignty Day to the annual School Calendar.

The guarantee of prep time for elementary school teachers added to the collective bargaining agreement.

The negotiating of a 7.5 hour work day or 37.5 hour work week.

The raising of classification vacation time to 15 days.

The negotiation of successive multi-year CBA contracts.

The news of Bernard stepping down hit district administrators by surprise.

“Yes, I am surprised that he's leaving,” Priscilla Manuelito, the former Gallup-McKinley Schools Board of Education president and current board secretary, said. “But change may have been needed with respect to union leadership. For example, he's a school district employee and also the head of the union. I have heard that some people have questioned the objectivity of being a district employee and at the same time the union boss.”

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Bernard, who speaks fluent Spanish, said the next union president would most likely be decided by the organization's current membership. He did not specify election dates.

"None of that has been decided yet," Bernard said. "I can't specifically comment on that."

A GMCS teacher for 22 years, Bernard said he's never really made it a practice to reveal the amount of members within MCFUSE. He said he's enjoyed decent dealings over the years with local and state education leaders.

"He did not resign from his job," Hyatt said. "But he let me know that he was no longer the president of the union."

***By Bernie Dotson  
Sun Correspondent***