A former instructional leader at Lincoln Elementary School has decided to fight a decision by officials of Gallup McKinley County Schools not to renew his contract for the next school year by hiring local attorney David Jordan.

Stephen Henderson received a letter from the district's superintendent, Mike Hyatt, on May 3 informing him that his contract would not be renewed.

Hyatt thanked Henderson for his willingness to relocate to Gallup during the school year and take over the instructional leadership duties but Hyatt then added that he did not think Henderson "was a good fit" for the district.

"In addition, as we transition from two elementary schools next year to one, I have decided to place one principal at Lincoln and Roosevelt, I have decided to place one principal over both schools beginning on May 8," Hyatt said in his letter.

"This will make the transition more seamless as we prepare budgets and instructional plans," he added.

He then told Henderson he would be paid out for the rest of his contract but his services would no longer be required as from the date of the letter. "This will give you time to search and find your next place of employment."

His letter ended by wishing Henderson well in his future.

While the district has the right to not renew his contract, said Jordan, district officials don't have the right to discriminate against him because of age.

Jordan pointed out that his client is 66 years old and the district was planning to replace with

someone a lot younger.

“That’s age discrimination and that is against the law,” Jordan said, adding that he is in the process of filing an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint on Henderson’s behalf against the district.