

# Are teachers obliged to supervise students in the cafeteria

[Education](#)



## Are Teachers Obligated to Supervise Students in the Cafeteria?

The case is between the teachers' union, Newbury Education Association and employer, Newbury Ohio Local School District Board of Education that primarily deals with the teachers with the extra duty of supervising cafeteria during the lunch time. During 2001-2002 the principals of the school observed increased behavioral problems amongst the students in the cafeteria and the playground. Thereafter, 20 minutes lunch period was introduced, every three days, for teachers to supervise the cafeteria, resulting in two teachers being present in cafeteria during the lunch breaks. The teachers filed the grievances for these new assignments.

According to the employers, there was standard management rights' clause in the parties' collective bargaining agreement which they had invoked in the present case to contain rowdy behavior of the students, during the lunch break. The union, on the other hand, asserted that cafeteria supervision was mentioned in the agreement for the secondary teachers only and due to lack of any past practice, assigning these duties to the elementary teachers was against the contract.

### Case Answer 1

Yes, Union's claim is right. There is a contractual basis, expressed in language because the contract mentions the supervision duties for the secondary teachers and not the elementary school teachers.

### Case Answer 2

No, there is no past evidence of elementary school teachers burdened with the added responsibilities of supervising cafeteria during the lunch break. There was also no inclusion of such in their job description as against the fact

that cafeteria supervision was included in the agreement for secondary teachers. The union also claimed that the lunch time was used by the teachers for various other educational activities like meeting parents, remediation, preparing and planning students' performance enhancing activities etc. that were designed for the overall development of the students. Cafeteria supervision would restrict these extra activities that are essential part of teaching aids and measures. Hence, extra duties are legally and ethically wrong.

### Case Answer 3

As an arbitrator, I would ensure that the elementary teachers were not burdened with the extra duty of cafeteria supervision because children in the elementary school require more educational aids and teachers-parental interaction for improved results. The roles and responsibilities of a teacher are multidimensional. The teachers often serve as role models for their students so they need to be very meticulous and at the same time, he/she should be extremely knowledgeable so as to command respect from their students.

In the contemporary times, lunch breaks are critical time for teachers as they use the time for improving and improvising the teaching methodologies. The time is also used for interacting with the parents to evolve easy for improving students' performance.

What do you think the outcome should be?

The elementary school teachers should not be assigned the duty of cafeteria supervision. Though the management may have discretionary rights but the fact that there has been no evidence of past practice of binding elementary

school teachers for cafeteria supervision and the contractual agreement is silent on the issue for elementary school teachers gives legitimacy to the grievances of the elementary school teachers.

#### Reference

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