



Duty Free Lunch for Teachers

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To be effective, South Carolina teachers need time during the workday to eat lunch. Some districts provide time for teachers to eat lunch, but not enough. Others provide no time at all, or teachers are on duty while they eat. Teachers, who have lunch duty (*meaning they supervise students eating their lunch*) usually must eat standing up. Many teachers, who have lunch away from students, eat at their desk and work, as a result of a lack of sufficient time for instructional planning.

An article that appeared in the Charleston *The Post and Courier* on November 16, 2010¹, reported that seventy-nine percent of more than 1,800 teachers surveyed by the Charleston Teacher Alliance, reported they eat lunch while supervising students at least once each week and 58 percent reported they each lunch while supervising students *every day*. Eighty-eight percent of teachers said having a duty-free lunch would be beneficial to their morale, personal well-being and job performance.

Teacher working conditions become student learning conditions.

In *The Well-Balanced Teacher*², Mike Anderson writes:

Most important, we should care about our emotional health because of its effect on our students. Their moods and attitudes about school are largely shaped by their teachers' energy and attitudes. When they have had teachers who are constantly stressed out or disconnected emotionally from their students, they are more anxious and less enthusiastic about school. Stressed-out and unhappy teachers mean stressed-out and unhappy children. If we are to be healthy role models for our students and create happy, energetic, and safe learning environments, we must take good care of ourselves.

Time to eat lunch gives teachers time to collect their thoughts, rejuvenate, and prepare to deliver a strong instructional program.

¹ <http://www.postandcourier.com/news/2010/nov/16/most-teachers-just-wanna-have-lunch/>

² Anderson, Mike. The Well-Balanced Teacher: How to Work Smarter and Stay Sane Inside the Classroom and Out. ASCD (September 30, 2010)

The SCEA supports state legislation and local school district policies that provide sufficient time for teachers to eat lunch. This legislation should include the following provisions:

1. A "teacher" shall include all school personnel required to be certified by the State Board of Education.
2. A teacher's workday shall be seven and one half (7½) hours and must include a duty-free lunch period of no less than thirty (30) consecutive minutes.
3. The itinerant teacher shall receive no less than thirty (30) minutes for lunch, and sufficient time to travel from one assignment location to another.

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