

**Publication: Daily Telegraph online**

**Date: December 2 2010**

Chew gum in class, German primary school tells pupils Wolfgang Ellegast from the Education.

Ministry in the southern German Hans Dasch, the school's headmaster, said no one was being forced to chew gum. "But it helps the children concentrate and deal with stress, particularly during written tests", he said.

"The prerequisite for learning with fun is that kids come to school without fear and that they feel happy ... Therefore we are encouraging them to chew gum in break and in lessons."

Organisers of the pilot scheme also argue that chewing gum is good for dental health, particularly after meals.

In order to avoid gum being stuck to the bottom of seats however, each desk has a special container decorated by the children.

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## **Chewing gum makes the grade with teachers**

**Berlin** A primary school in southern Germany is encouraging pupils to chew gum in class to improve their grades. "Chewing gum is good for the children's health and improves their cognitive performance," said Wolfgang Ellegast, of the education ministry in Bavaria, home to the Volkenschwand school. The headmaster, Hans Dasch, said: "It helps the children concentrate and deal with stress, particularly during tests. None of them stick their gum on the seats. They chew in a very disciplined manner." (AFP)

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# lutherpendragon

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Scepticism surrounds pilot scheme in Bavaria aimed at increasing concentration and encouraging learning.

There was a time when there was no better way to irk a teacher than to chew gum in the classroom. But German schoolchildren are now being encouraged to do just that under a scheme to increase concentration and encourage learning.

In a pilot project at a primary school in Bavaria pupils are being given sticks of gum and told to chew them during lessons and at break time. It follows research which concluded that continuous chewing stimulates the brain.

"The positive effect of chewing probably lies in the fact that the part of the brain in the brainstem that keeps us alert is constantly stimulated, as a result of which the attention level rises, as does the flow of blood to the brain and with it the ability to learn," said Siegfried Lehl, head of the Society of Brain Training and a scientist at the University of Erlangen.

Hans Dasch, headteacher at the Volkenschwand primary school in Bavaria, said he had decided to introduce active gum chewing because "children need to come to school without any fear and to feel contentment.

"The learning environment needs to match their needs, which is why we're encouraging them to chew gum during break times and in lessons."

He said sugar-free gum had an added health benefit in that it kept teeth clean during meals.

The plan was met with scepticism in some quarters, particularly by those concerned that it would encourage anti-social habits, and by others worried about the disposal of the used chewed gum.

"Estimates for Germany's towns and communities show that around €900m is spent on cleaning chewing gum from our streets every year," said historian Thomas Paulwitz, who penned his criticism of the project in a newspaper column. He said Germany's inner cities were on average littered with 35 pieces of gum a square metre, with each piece taking two minutes to remove at a cost of more than €1 a time.

But Dasch insisted his children were being encouraged to abide by certain rules. "They have made a firm agreement with teachers that they will keep their mouths closed while chewing, unless they want to speak, and that they will dispose of the gum in a proper manner."

Claims have long been made about the benefits of gum on concentration levels. In 2002 scientists from the University of Northumbria found people who chewed gum saw a 35% improvement in their ability to recall words.

Soldiers of the United States military have been supplied with free gum since the first world war due to the belief that it boosts soldiers' concentration and helps to relieve stress.

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## GUMMER SCHOOL

Pupils are being told to chew gum at a school in Bavaria, Germany – because it helps them concentrate.

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