

To improve learning, German school allows chewing gum

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Few things annoy a teacher more than a pupil chewing gum in class, but a primary school in southern Germany is now actively encouraging them to do so -- in order to improve their grades.

"[Chewing gum](#) is good for the children's health and improves their [cognitive performance](#)," said Wolfgang Ellegast from the education ministry in Bavaria, home to the Volkenschwand school where the pilot project is being run.

"No one is being forced to chew gum," headmaster Hans Dasch told AFP. "But it helps the [children](#) concentrate and deal with stress, particularly during written tests."

He added: "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."

Chewing gum is also good for dental health, particularly after meals when it is not possible for the 70 children aged between six and 10 at the [school](#) to brush their teeth, organisers said.

But it is not anarchy. According to a "firm agreement" with teachers, the children must keep their mouths closed while chewing -- except for when speaking, of course -- and properly dispose of the gum.

To this end, each desk equipped with a special container decorated by

the children themselves with bees, ladybirds, snails and the like in partnership with a local artist.

"All the children respect the rules. None of them makes bubbles ... None of them stick their gum on the seats," said the headmaster, who admits he chews gum too, along with several teachers.

"The pupils chew in a very disciplined manner."

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