

Gum in the Classroom: It's a Sticky Situation

As the teacher calls on Jimmy to give his opinion on the topic the class was discussing, she can't help but notice the incredible wad of bright pink chewing gum in his mouth. Not only will it be hard to understand Jimmy, but also she'll be lucky if Jimmy can get out his thoughts without choking on the mouthful! This is only one of the many concerns teachers face daily as chewing gum continues to show up in classrooms, despite the school rule that it is banned. Students should not chew gum in class because it acts as a distraction to others, it is a health issue, and it is a safety issue. If students continue to disregard the rules, consequences will need to become more severe.

Chewing gum acts as an incredible distraction to students and teachers. In a recent study, 78% of teachers felt that gum chewing was distracting to themselves and other students during discussion time. It has become a common practice for some students to be known as "suppliers" of gum. These students will bring multiple packs of gum to school to share with their friends and classmates. It seems to be quite an epidemic when one student asks the "supplier" for a piece of gum. Suddenly everyone feels the need to do the same thing. This can take away valuable class time and makes many students lose focus on the topic being discussed. In addition, once the students have gum it appears that the need arises to chew this gum with such force that one would think it was the last piece of gum on earth. The open-mouthed, "chewing like a cow" that occurs is absolutely the most annoying thing in the world! The distraction factor alone is enough for most teachers to want gum out of their classrooms.

Comment [SOC1]: Catchy title

Comment [SOC2]: Anecdote

Comment [SOC3]: Thesis with opinion and three points.

Comment [SOC4]: Main point supported by research

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Chewing gum also poses a health issue for students. If students are not chewing sugar-free gum the issue of sugar intake is relevant. Schools are currently under tight lock and key in terms of their freedom to give students food, particularly with high sugar content. Teachers and school staff should be promoting healthy lifestyles and not allow students to consume sugar on a non-supervised basis. For example, if gum chewing was allowed a student could potentially spend all day with a piece of gum in his/her mouth completely unknown to any adults. The effects of popping one piece of gum into one's mouth, one after another, can build up a pretty high level of sugar intake. Students really need to join forces with the teachers to take control of their own health!

Safety has also become a major issue when it comes to chewing gum. Not only does it pose the typical choking hazard when the majority of staff is not trained in abdominal thrusts, but it also poses a risk when it gets left behind. Students will be the first to complain when they sit down at their desks and reach under only to find a large wad of old chewing gum. The dramatic displays of "yuck" and "ewwww" are absolutely Oscar worthy. A student will throw a fit if he/she even comes in close contact with someone's spit laden hunk of goo. Whether the used gum is on a desk, a chair, or on the floor, the sanitary concerns and the safety issues if it were to get stuck on clothing, shoes, or even hair, makes the gum a hazard in the classroom.

Many students will argue that gum aids them in their concentration during quizzes and tests, as well as focusing on daily activities. Chewing gum, when used for this purpose has been proven to have its benefits. However, at the middle school level the workload is not comparable to that in a high school or college setting. Aiding in concentration when students are usually engaged in such middle school activities as cooperative learning and physical activities is irrelevant. Middle school students are not yet at an age where they are

Comment [SOC5]: Shows the other side.

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mature enough to handle the responsibilities that accompany gum chewing.

Gum chewing really needs to be taken out of the middle school setting because it has become a distraction in the classroom, and it poses health and safety threats. Students need to realize that their disregard of the school rule is not going to be tolerated any longer. Teachers and staff need to draw the line and refuse to budge when it comes to allowing gum chewing! Students need to start considering gum chewing a privilege, one that has been completely taken away from them for their lack of responsibility!

Comment [SOC7]: Restates the thesis.

Comment [SOC8]: Ends with a call to action.