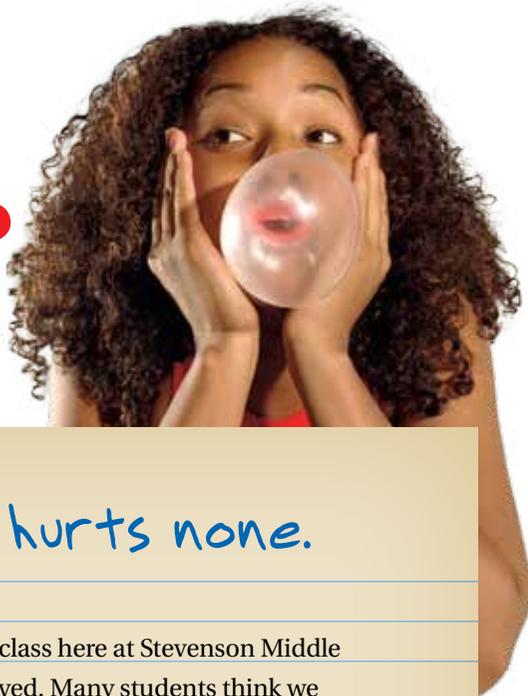


Should Gum Be Allowed in School?

Vanessa says yes. Principal Mackey says no. Who makes the better argument? You decide!



YES

Chewing gum helps many, hurts none.

Dear Principal Mackey,

As the student council representative for the seventh-grade class here at Stevenson Middle School, it is my duty to let you know about a request I have received. Many students think we should be allowed to chew gum at school. I know that Stevenson has a strict no-gum policy, but after speaking to my peers and doing some research on the issue, I believe that this policy should be reconsidered for several reasons.

First, chewing gum can help students learn. Many of my classmates say that chewing gum helps them focus, and according to my research, they are not alone. Teachers in other schools have reported that students who chew gum in class pay attention better and stay focused longer than those who do not. One study even showed that students who chewed gum during a test scored higher than those who did not. Experts say that this is because chewing gum can improve concentration and make students more at ease. If gum helps students do better in school, shouldn't the students at Stevenson be allowed to take advantage of this educational tool?

Second, there is nothing harmful about gum. Many dentists actually encourage their patients to chew sugar-free gum. On its website, the American Dental Association says that chewing sugarless gum after meals helps prevent tooth decay.

I know, of course, that the main reason we can't have gum isn't that it's bad for us—it's that gum tends to end up stuck under desks or to the bottoms of shoes. But what if students promise to chew gum responsibly? We could **institute** a set of rules to make sure that gum is thrown away properly. I can guarantee that students would follow these rules, because if we were given this privilege, we would not want it taken away. Also, I think my fellow students would agree that finding old, chewed-up gum under desks is gross. Like you, we want our school to be clean.

In conclusion, I think the research I have presented shows that allowing gum in school would not cause harm. In fact, it would be beneficial. On behalf of the seventh-grade class, I hope that you will consider our request.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Jacobs

BLASIUS ERLINGER/GETTY IMAGES (GIRL)

SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (ALL PHOTOS)

NO

Gum at school? No thanks!

Dear Vanessa,

Thank you for bringing this issue to my attention—I am always eager to hear from students about their needs and concerns. I also appreciate the thoughtfulness and thorough research that clearly went into your letter.

I am sorry to say, though, that I cannot simply lift the ban on gum. The research you presented does show that gum could benefit some students, but what about those who would be distracted by it? Not everyone chews gum quietly; chomping and popping can be very disruptive.

Which brings me to my next point.

Allowing gum would affect more people at Stevenson than just students. Think about how much our **custodial** team does to keep our school sparkling clean. If I allow gum, the custodians will **inevitably** have to add scraping gum off desks, water fountains, and carpets to their list of things to do. I appreciate your promise that students would properly dispose of their gum—one of my favorite things about Stevenson students is their respect for our building and staff—but I don't believe the benefits of gum chewing are worth the risk of damaging school property or creating additional work for my employees.

As to your **assertion** that there is nothing harmful about chewing gum, I have to disagree. It would be impossible to enforce a "sugar-free gum only" rule, and chewing sugary gum is terrible for your teeth. (Trust me, I know. I can thank my love for sugary gum for seven cavities.) Also, I worry about the choking risk that gum would pose in a class like gym or band.

I can't make any promises, but I am willing to consider a **compromise**. At our next student council meeting, let's discuss the types of rules that would ensure gum brings only positive changes to our school, such

as restricting gum to certain classes (like study periods) or areas (like the cafeteria).

Thank you for being such a dedicated student council member.

Sincerely,

Principal Mackey



SCAVENGER HUNT

Directions: Hunt through each letter for the following elements.

1. Underline the **central idea**, or **central claim**.
2. Put a star next to two pieces of **supporting evidence**.
3. Circle the **counterargument**.
4. Put a double star next to the writer's **rebuttal**.

YOU decide: Who made the stronger argument?

