

During Reading

- 2. The following essay makes a bold claim about chewing gum in school. Read the essay, and identify the **main idea(s)** being argued as well as the **opposing viewpoints** the writer acknowledges. Remember that when writing an argument, the writer must present both sides of an issue by anticipating and responding to opposing views.
- 3. As you read this text, identify the writer’s viewpoint and highlight the claim being made. Underline the evidence that supports that claim. Circle anything that suggests ideas that are opposed to the writer’s viewpoint.

My Notes

To Chew or Not to Chew

Is it right to ban gum in school? Many people would agree that gum should be banned. Nasty gum stuck in unlikely places is a nuisance for both teachers and students. Teachers and administrators alike say it is distracting, and it creates a janitorial nightmare. But wait—if schools are interested in improving student achievement, they will rethink their policy against chewing gum. Research shows that chewing gum actually improves learning by increasing brain activity and focus.

Gum chewing helps students stay alert and ready to learn. Students in my classes sometimes have trouble staying awake, much less keeping alert. If they chew gum, the movement of the jaw can help keep students awake. Even better, research done by Kathleen Melanson, from the University of Rhode Island, has shown that chewing gum raises your metabolism by 20 percent (www.medicalnewstoday.com). This increase in metabolism shows a direct link between physical alertness and chewing gum.

Some people think that gum is an unhealthy habit, but when examined closely this idea is not supported by research. As a matter of fact, gum is a healthy option to avoid overeating. Others say that chewing sweet gum causes tooth decay. However, many gums contain xylitol, which makes them sugar free. Research by the Trident Company, a chewing gum manufacturer, shows that chewing sugar-free gum can reduce cavities by 70 percent. According to Trident, chewing gum is like chewing fluoride in its cavity-prevention power.

Most importantly, gum promotes learning by helping students work better and longer. The Wrigley Company, which has produced chewing gum for decades, claims that soldiers have chewed gum since World War I to improve concentration during stressful situations. In addition, research conducted by the American Society for Nutrition found that students who chewed gum during class over a 14-week period had a significant increase in test scores and received a better final grade compared to those who had not chewed gum. By now it should be clear that chewing gum has real benefits. One last piece of evidence indicates chewing gum increases brain power and the ability to concentrate. Chewing gum makes the brain think it is going to get food. As a result of this chewing motion, research has shown that insulin, which enhances learning and memory, is released to the brain and helps it to concentrate and focus (Andrew Scholey, Swinburne University, www.medicalnewstoday.com).

Students do not have to chew gum to do well in school, but the evidence clearly shows that chewing gum may help students do better in school. Schools should do all they can to support student learning. Please urge our school administration to change its thinking on banning gum in school.

e. **Organization:** How does the thesis statement set up the organization of the essay?

f. **Transitions:** What words does the writer use to connect thoughts and guide the reader through the essay?

g. **Sources:** What sources does the writer cite? How do those sources support the writer’s claim with relevant evidence? Do the sources appear credible? How does the source of the evidence affect its relevance?

Check Your Understanding

The most effective form of evidence in an argument combines logic, or clear reasoning, and relevant information. For example, to say that “chewing sugar-free gum can reduce cavities by 70 percent” is a fact that logically supports the idea that chewing gum is healthy. However, reducing cavities does not necessarily lead to better performance in school, so this fact may not be as relevant to the claim as other evidence. Which evidence cited do you think is the most logical while also being relevant to the writer’s claim?

ACTIVITY 2

Writing an Argumentative Class Essay

WRITING PROMPT: Consider a decision that young people are asked to make between two potential options (such as whether to eat fast food or choose a healthier option). As a class, write an essay that discusses the opposing sides of that issue and convinces other seventh graders that one option is better than the other. Be sure to:

- Establish a clear position – the claim
- Use formal language appropriate for the purpose and audience
- Include **relevant** evidence that is logically organized and supports the writer’s viewpoint
- Include a variety of **credible** evidence based on fact rather than opinion
- Anticipate and address potential audience concerns and/or questions
- Anticipate and answer counterarguments
- Use an appropriate blend of simple, compound, complex, and compound/ complex sentences

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Evidence is said to be **relevant** if it is closely related to the issue or topic.

A **credible** source is one that is convincing or believable because it is reliable, accurate, and trustworthy.