

# Do your parents have a solar heating?

## Climate awareness test in Swiss textbooks

by Philipp Gut\*



Philipp Gut.  
(Picture wikipedia)

A Swiss primary school textbook subjects pupils to a climate attitude test. Miles away from any scientific basis.

The chapter bears the unmistakable title "Climate check". However, it does not come from a brochure by Greenpeace or the fanatical

*Climate Youth*, but from an official English textbook published by the renowned textbook publisher *Klett and Balmer* in Baar, Switzerland. "Young World 4" is aimed at primary school pupils in year 6. In addition to the illustration of a perspiring furry animal, the story of the "Pupil's Book" states: "Look at the polar bear. Read the text and discuss what the problem is."

To make sure that even the last person understands this, it continues: "Global warming affects us all. For the polar bears, this means that they will have nowhere to live if the ice at the North Pole melts." Thus, emotionally attuned and set on course, the pupils then must take a veritable attitude test to find out their alleged "climate footprint". Far from any scientific methodology, points are awarded for climate-correct answers. The relevant questions not only assess the pupils' behaviour, but also their parents' lifestyle.

### Warnings against eating meat

The "climate test" covers different areas. On the topic "Eating and shopping", the answer is: "I always leave some food on my plate." Fifteen penalty points are awarded for this. Anyone who "sometimes throws away food" is penalised with ten penalty points. Those who exhibit the desired behaviour and "always" finish off



"Look at the polar bear. Read the text and discuss what the problem is." (Picture wikipedia)

everything are awarded five points. The only thing better for the climate would be to eat nothing.

What you eat is also assessed. Pupils are judged on whether they eat seasonal fruit and vegetables and whether the food is regional and organic. Those who eat what they like are capped at 25 points. Even worse than those who indulge in a banana or an apple at an inappropriate time of year are those pupils who eat ("more or less") meat or fish every day (30 points), according to the textbook.

Of course, eating habits also depend largely on the parental home, but the question about the type of heating becomes the ultimate judgement on the parents. Anyone who states that "our home is heated with solar energy or another form of renewable energy" receives 10 points. On the other hand, those who live in a home heated with conventional energy receive 40 points.

Children who take a bath once a week (in the past they would have been praised for doing so) receive a medium chide (20 points). Those who shower every day are still penalised with 10 points. On the other hand, those who switch off the water while lathering up are rewarded (5 points), although they are not asked how often and for how long they shower in this intermittent manner.

Again, the questions on "room temperature" are aimed very directly at parents. Children from households who say: "We never wear pullovers at home in wintertime because it would be too warm", are frowned upon (40 points). There is

\* Dr Philipp Gut, born 1971, is a Swiss journalist and author. He was domestic editor and deputy editor-in-chief of *Weltwoche* until December 2019. He is publisher and editor of *Umwelt Zeitung*, writes articles for *Weltwoche* and runs a PR consultancy agency.

also a scolding for families who dry their clothes in the tumble dryer (20 points).

### **Maximum penalty for flying**

Finally, mobility behaviour is put under scrutiny: Do the children “always” walk or cycle to school (0 points)? Do they “sometimes” use public transport (5)? Or are they even driven by their parents (10)? Even holidays are made unpleasant for pupils: it almost seems like an incitement to denunciation when pupils must state whether they have flown with their parents once in the last five years (40). Holidays in Switzerland or trips to neighbouring countries by train are allowed to some extent but are also not very popular (10 points). Those who fly away on holiday every year with

their families get the biggest beating: There are a devastating 150 penalty points for this.

At the end, the pupils are instructed to link the number of points they have scored to the welfare of the polar bear (“How is your polar bear doing?”), to agree on more climate-friendly behaviour in group discussions (“Talk about what you can do”) and to make an individual commitment to adapt their own lifestyle. After a month, the students must check whether they have really adapted their actions and activities – and they have to compare this with others in the class.

### *Any questions?*

*Source: “Weltwoche”. <https://weltwoche.ch/story/habendeine-eltern-eine-solarheizung/>, 14 August 2024*

*(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)*