“Work Smarter, Not Harder!” – Music?

Teachers are often asked if kids should work in a silent environment, or be allowed to listen to music on headphones while doing HW.  The answer is… yes.

Some kids do work better in a silent environment because music can be distracting.

However, it is EQUALLY TRUE that music can help other students.  There are some students who get distracted by outside noises:  a sister playing piano, a brother destroying the Lego world, a parent preparing dinner… Those students may actually work better with headphones on because it allows them to block out the "real world."  Students who do this successfully are usually listening to favorite music that they know well, so they aren't really paying attention to it.  The music works like a "white noise" that keeps their brain focused on the task at hand.

So… how do you know which student you have?  Well, middle school is the perfect time to experiment and find out.  Spend a week using music and keep track of how long it takes to do HW.  Then try a week of silence.  A common result might be that music helps with some assignments (ex: math), but not with others (reading a textbook).

As we know, a developing sense of independence and control is very important to students at this age so ASK them to compare and self-reflect to decide which is best for them!