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Musical Learning

Would you rather complete an excruciatingly boring algebra assignment in complete silence, or with your favorite song playing in the background? Personally, I am more motivated to complete the assignment if I know I can listen to music while I work on it. At CAL, some teachers believe that music is a distraction. They believe music can lead to incomplete work or failing grades, but there is a distinguished beneficial side to it. Some teachers allow music, but other teachers do not see the benefits as clearly as others and restrict headphone usage in the classroom. CAL should permit students to listen to music while doing independent work because it helps students focus, it motivates students to continue working on the task presented before them, and it calms the nerves of stressed students.

Some students focus better on their school work if they have some sort of background noise, such as music. Similarly to how students learn in different ways, they focus in diverse ways as well. Some need complete silence, others need soft music in the background, while a few need another task to work on simultaneously. In an experiment recorded in author Sheela Doraiswamy’s “Does Music Help You Study?” students were given a test accompanied by various environmental factors such as music, silence, and a speaker (par. 4). According to Doraiswamy, the results proved that for the majority, silence was the most beneficial. However, Doraiswamy records that for some listening to music boosted their scores (par. 7). Therefore, students are scientifically proven to succeed in different environments. All teachers at CAL should be aware of this and not restrain the students who work better with music. Certain student that focus better with music will not be able to fully explore the depths of their knowledge with the idea that music is a distraction deeply rooted in some teacher’s heads.

Not only does music keeps students focused, but it also motivates them to continue in their work because they are able to enjoy it more. If a student is struggling with a worksheet for an hour, they will feel miserable and may not want to complete it. However, if they are listening to their favorite song, the task will be more enjoyable and the student will be motivated to finish it. According to author Julia Selby Smith’s “3 Reasons You Should Try Studying While Listening to Music,” music boosts students’ motivation to tackle large loads of work (par. 5). Smith states that music “engages with the body's autonomic nervous system,” which means it “can control our physiological functions and emotions,” giving students literal pumps of energy to bring them out of boredom (par. 5). Additionally, when music is added to a homework assignment, it can physically give the student energy and motivation to finish. CAL teachers are always pushing students with pressing due dates and urging them to get as much completed as possible. For this reason, they should allow students to listen to music in order to supplement the motivation already given by the ominous due dates for the assignment.

The workload of Christian Academy classes is incredibly stressful at times and students can easily calm their nerves by listening to music. When students are stressed, they are preoccupied and unable to complete assignments to the best of their ability. For many students, music is enjoyable and brings a calming sense to their day. According to author Suzanne Boothby’s “How Music Affects Our Moods,” researchers conducted trials and concluded that “music is a valid therapy to potentially reduce depression and anxiety, as well as to improve mood, self-esteem, and quality of life” (3). This proves that music helps relieve stress and anxiety associated with schoolwork which enables the student to perform their best on assignments. Teachers should acknowledge the stress students are under and allow them to try to alleviate it by calming their nerves with music.

Those who oppose listening to music while studying argue that all music distracts the student from the task at hand. In “Does Music Help You Study,” Sheela Doraiswamy records that some researchers believe that “whether students enjoyed the music or not, having it on while they worked was just as distracting as hearing someone talk” (Doraiswamy par. 6). These people believe that it disables and distracts the students from reaching their academic potential. However, this is proven wrong in researcher Perlovsky et al.’s “Mozart effect, cognitive dissonance, and the pleasure of music,” which explains how pleasing music does indeed improve cognitive ability (1). According to Perlovsky et al., the Mozart effect is the idea that music increases cognitive learning (2). Research collected by Perlovsky et al. concludes that “agreeable music was correlated with longer duration of tests under stressful conditions and better performance above that under indifferent or unpleasant music” (1). From these studies, the student listening to favored music rather than unpleasant music while studying receives more benefits and achieves higher test scores. In other words, not all music will take away from the focus of the student, only unpleasant music will. For this reason, teachers should allow students to listen to enjoyable music while studying because students who listen to pleasing music increase their intellectual abilities.

Music is scientifically proven to be advantageous to students while studying. Music helps students focus on their work, motivates students to continue working on assignments, and calms students’ nerves when they are pressed with incoming deadlines. Therefore, CAL teachers should provide the students with the option of listening to music while working. While the teachers who restrict music during independent work might believe that music is distracting, there are more benefits that outweigh these negative beliefs. This being said, teachers should recognize the rewards they are causing the students to miss out on and should allow the students to benefit and improve their grades. After all, are teachers not supposed to want their students to excel in the classroom and develop study skills that produce positive results? If all the teachers at Christian Academy recognize this, many students will benefit and succeed. The small act of allowing music in class can transform a student's life; it can improve their test scores, which can enable them to be accepted into colleges that can transform their lives forever.

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