

Lauren Peterson

The Student:

Jill (named changed) is a ninth grade student in the World History I class that I have been teaching. I noticed Jill early on in the fall semester because she was not engaged in the class at all. Most days she would draw or write in a journal, completely ignoring any lecture or class activity. When I taught a couple of lessons in the fall, she paid attention, but this was probably just to be nice since I was new. I did learn her name quickly in the fall, and would say hi to her in the hallways and before class. She would always say hi as well, and ask if I was teaching that day.

Lack of motivation was a primary concern of mine when I decided to become a teacher. So, the reason I chose this student was because she seemed completely unmotivated and not interested in history, but I seemed to have a good report with her from the beginning. I knew this might make the two-for-ten strategy work better.

Journal:

Note for Journal: I put background info or comments in parentheses to make the conversations more understandable to an outside reader. Also, I usually talked to this student before class started, but I had to wait to write down these interactions until after class or later in the day because I was teaching the ninth grade classes every day. I wrote them down as soon as possible, and I tried to record them as accurately as possible.

	I said	Student (Jill) said
Day 1	Good morning How are you today, Jill? Just ok? Oh yes, getting enough sleep is pretty important.	Good morning I'm ok (she seemed out of it) Yeah, I didn't get a lot of sleep so I'm tired. Yeah, I had project that I had to get done... I should be able to sleep more tonight.

	<p>Oh well that's good! (my first attempt, so the conversation kind of faded away here)</p>	<p>Yeah</p>
<p>Day 2</p>	<p>Hi, Jill! How are you today? Better?</p> <p>You were tired yesterday...? (awkward silence)</p> <p>We're going to be doing some drawing today. (I've noticed that she likes to draw, and she has told me before that she likes art class the best.)</p> <p>Yes, we have to learn about history in history class! (said with a smile and lightheartedly)</p> <p>What do you like about art class?</p> <p>(We continue to talk a bit about art.)</p>	<p>Huh?</p> <p>Oh yeah, I'm better today, I guess.</p> <p>Oh, but it's history stuff isn't it?</p> <p>Yeah, this class is ok, but it can't compare to art class. I'm not really into history.</p> <p>I like to draw, and we get to work on our own things.... Like not everyone doing all the same thing. And no hard tests. (My CT is known for being tough.)</p>
<p>Day 3</p>	<p>Good morning! (I instantly notice that she seems to be in a good mood today.)</p> <p>(I've noticed her instrument case.) Are you in band?</p> <p>What instrument do you play?</p> <p>Do you want to play the clarinet... I mean do you like it more than the flute or no?</p>	<p>Good morning! (smile)</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Oh, well I play the clarinet, but I used to play the flute.</p> <p>Oh yeah, I love my clarinet. I had to turn it in to get fixed even though I take care of it and clean it out and everything. They just needed to take it to check it (I didn't fully understand the reason for her not having her clarinet for a few days). But I finally got it back, and I'm so happy. (She continues to tell me about band.)</p>
<p>Day 4</p>	<p>(Jill and another student were looking at something on one of their phones)</p> <p>Sure! (shows me the picture) Oh, cute!</p>	<p>(other student to me) Do you want to see a picture of my aunt's new puppy?</p> <p>(other student) Yeah, it's a Siberian husky. She has three Siberian huskies now.</p>

	<p>Oh wow...</p> <p>Yes. (she shows me a drawing she had made in art class) Oh, that's good. Is that a specific person?</p> <p>That's who I thought it looked like! (I hadn't wanted to state that without knowing.) Wow, that's good.</p> <p>(class starts)</p>	<p>(Jill pulls out her phone) Want to see what we're working on in art class?</p> <p>It's supposed to be Bon Jovi.</p> <p>(smiles) Thanks!</p>
Day 5	<p>Hi, Jill. How are you doing today?</p> <p>Are you ready for the quiz? (I know we are supposed to avoid academics, but I'm genuinely interested and I slipped up and mentioned academics.)</p> <p>I know it's not your favorite, but you've been here every day, paying attention, so you should do fine.</p>	<p>Ok.</p> <p>Eh, I don't know... Honestly, I don't really care much about history.</p> <p>Ehhhhhh (indicates that she has been paying attention most of the time, but not always.) (That's an improvement though, she used to hardly ever pay attention.)</p>
Day 6	(a Monday)	(Jill is absent)
Day 7	<p>Hi, how are you today?</p> <p>Oh yes, I noticed you were out sick yesterday.</p> <p>Well, I'm glad to hear you are feeling a little better and I hope you feel completely better soon.</p>	<p>Better than yesterday.</p> <p>Yeah..... (puts head down, she is clearly not interested in continued conversation today)</p> <p>Thanks.</p>
Day 8	<p>(She says hi first today)</p> <p>Hi! How is your day going?</p> <p>(This story lasted the rest of the time until class started.)</p>	<p>Hi!</p> <p>Oh, the funniest thing happened in first block. (She told me a story about one of her friends calling someone by the wrong name. I didn't completely understand the joke because I don't know the other student, but I laughed and agreed. I was just glad she was sharing.)</p>
Day 9	<p>Hello, Jill. How are you today?</p> <p>And how is band and art going?</p> <p>I heard the band is going to a festival in Smithfield soon?</p>	<p>Pretty good.</p> <p>Oh, good!</p> <p>Yeah, we're leaving school early that day to go.</p>

	<p>So is this a competition or a concert or...?</p> <p>And the best part is you don't have to miss history class that day since you leave at 10:30! (said lightly with a smile.)</p> <p>(She had missed an assignment, that I had reminded her about once, then told her that it was up to her to get it in, but lateness would take off points.)</p> <p>Good, I look forward to reading it.</p>	<p>It's just a concert, but it should be fun.</p> <p>Ooooh, yeah, of course.... I don't think I'd go if I had to miss history.... (sarcastic, but said with a smile)</p> <p>Oh, and I'm definitely going to have that essay for you tomorrow. I've just had so many other projects and things going on, but I'm going to get it done.</p>
<p>Day 10</p>	<p>Great! You know I have to take off the points for lateness, but it's always good to get some points instead of none.)</p> <p>How is everything else going with you?</p> <p>Oh, do you have another picture?</p> <p>Oh, I see. That makes sense. Well, you'll have to show me when it's finished!</p> <p>I'm sure it will be great. Your picture of Bon Jovi was awesome.</p>	<p>Ms. Peterson, I got it done. (She hands me her paper.)</p> <p>Yeah, I know.</p> <p>Pretty good. I'm working on a new drawing in art class that I really like. (She describes the drawing.)</p> <p>Oh, no... I don't like to take pictures until it's done...</p> <p>Yeah, if it turns out ok!</p> <p>(Bell rings, and Jill goes to her seat.)</p>
<p>Day 11</p>	<p>(Monday - The first block had a test, so the desks are arranged in rows. Several students are seeming nervous about a pop quiz.)</p> <p>Oh, yes, I did. (I hand her the essay, which was graded a D.) It would have been an A if you had turned it in on time!</p> <p>I understand being busy, I do. But I still have to take the points off or it's not fair to other students.</p>	<p>(Jill walks to the front of the room.) Did you get a chance to grade my essay?</p> <p>(She looks at the grade.) I know, I know. I was just so busy with other things in other classes....</p> <p>Oh, I know. I understand. (She looks around.) Are we having a quiz today?</p>

	<p>No, the first and fourth blocks have a test.</p> <p>(smile) I certainly didn't mean to.</p> <p>(To whole class) Everyone, we do not have a quiz today. This set up was for the other classes today.</p> <p>(This conversation also ended up being about academics, but Jill brought up the topic and really wanted to know about her essay, so I wasn't going to deflect and I just went with it.)</p>	<p>Oh, good. You scared me!</p> <p>(She smiles and goes to her seat.)</p>
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Reflection:

I started off the first day not knowing where to take the conversation, so it ended early because Jill didn't seem talkative that day. There was at least one other day like that after she had been out sick. I didn't want to push her to talk when she still wasn't feeling well. A couple of the conversations did revolve around academics, but it was really difficult to not have that come up for ten days straight, especially when she had late work to turn in. This only happened twice though, and it was brief. The conversations started to go well only a few days in when Jill began to share her interests with me. She got really excited to talk about her interests and talents. By the end of the 11 days (I added one due to her absence one day), Jill had caught up with her work and would not hesitate to approach me with questions or thoughts to share. She is still on the quiet side in class, but she definitely pays more attention than she did at the beginning of the year. I think there are a few reasons for this change, but the two-for-ten strategy contributed and helped.

After implementing this strategy, I would attribute Jill's lack of motivation to a lack of interest in history. However, it is more complicated than that. Throughout the fall semester, I

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noticed that my CT did not really push Jill to participate. It had seemed that he had given up quite early in the year. In reality, he told me that many of the ninth grade students were not taking school seriously because the former middle school principal would almost never hold a student back. Now in high school, it has taken several students a long time to realize that they will be taking the course again next year if they do not put in the effort to pass. As the year has gone on, Jill has started to take this class more seriously. However, she still lacked motivation most of the time when I began the two-for-ten strategy.

Building a relationship with Jill really seemed to work. She pays attention more when I teach. I thought this might fade away after a couple of weeks or after the first time that I handed back a grade. It hasn't. I suppose it is difficult to just ignore the teacher, the class, and the work after having a nice conversation with the teacher before class. I was skeptical of this strategy, but I have to admit that it has really seemed to work. Jill still hands in work late sometimes, but she is determined to get it in eventually. She still doesn't pay attention some days, but she is engaged with class activities most of the time now. Best of all, she knows that she can come and talk to me about school work and her other interests. She is happy to show me her drawings now. At the beginning of the year, this would not have been the case.

I have a tendency to be shy, so this assignment changed me as a teacher. I was nervous about approaching students who weren't doing their work and calling them out on it. It almost seems silly now that I would have been nervous about that aspect of being a teacher. It was much easier than I thought it would be to approach a student to talk to them about their life, and to approach them in class and tell them to get back to work. I have been able to be myself in the classroom. The students respond very well to this. I feel confident that I will be able to

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approach students in the future and talk to them about academics, performance, behavior, or their interests.

I was also concerned that the student would think it was strange that I single them out to speak to every day. I also thought that the other students might notice and say something. This didn't happen because it was not as though I shut out the other students. They were able to talk to me and say hi as well.

In the end, I think that Jill was able to see that I cared. She knows that I want her to do well, and that I know she can do well. She was able to see me as a teacher and a person. Now she wants to turn in assignments and participate more in class. Of course, I can't take all the credit. Jill was already in the process of realizing that she will have to try a bit harder to pass this class.