

Using courthouse portfolios to establish rapport and motivate college students

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ABSTRACT

Motivation enhances student learning (Wang, 2012). One means for an instructor to stimulate students and get them actively involved is to establish good rapport with them (Cottringer & Sloan, 2003). For this study, county courthouse portfolios were developed and used to build relationships and motivate college students. The strategy was applied at an urban institution that attracted a large number of its students from the resident state. The professor, over a three-year period, visited all county courthouses in the state and for each, developed a portfolio containing photos of the courthouse with him pictured therein, other photos, and descriptive and informative data about the facility. Back in the classroom the professor surveyed the students to determine their resident county and shared with them information contained in the portfolios. The students were also requested to provide other information about the county which could be added to the portfolio. A challenge was issued to the students, "If the professor walked a mile in your shoes, would you join him and run a marathon to educate school children?" The ultimate objective was to establish an authentic relationship with students and to motivate them to strive for excellence in the teacher preparation program. The study is supported by a review of the literature on elements essential in motivating college students to achieve and it informs the profession as to how different techniques may be helpful. Initial results showed that the courthouse-portfolio concept produced positive results in establishing rapport and motivating college students.

Keywords: college success, higher education, motivation, student-teacher rapport, teaching strategies

INTRODUCTION

Something that is important or authentic to students is likely to become an object of interest. It was surmised that county courthouses have a certain appeal to all students. A county courthouse is a place where courts of law are held or the main building in which county offices are housed (Feathers, 2008). Students drive automobiles and they must purchase license plates at or through the courthouse. It is also the place where marriage licenses are acquired and many other legal documents are obtained or processed. Thus, the courthouse is an interest in common to both the students and the professor.

The county-courthouse concept was instituted as a mechanism for the professor to establish genuine rapport with teacher education majors in a core course in the curriculum. Both the literature and personal experience gave credence to the value of teacher-student rapport in the learning process. Wilson, Ryan, and Pugh (2010) indicated that students who believed they had experienced rapport with their professor reported greater enjoyment of the material covered in the course and of the instructor, and they rated themselves more likely to attend class, study, contact their professor, and engage in other academically beneficial behaviors.

Rapport heightens students' motivation and motivation is a major factor to enhance learning. According to Wilson, Ryan, and Pugh (2010), instructor nonverbal and verbal immediacy has been associated with student motivation, perceptions of learning, and favorable attitude toward the course and the instructor.

Since achievement in college is such a complex phenomenon, certain indicators of success were more manageable to orchestrate and assess than identification and use of a specific rapport or motivation scale. Therefore, careful attention was given to such factors as class attendance, participation and demeanor in class, submission of assignments, and performance on assignments to assess the impact of the courthouse portfolios on student achievement.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of county courthouse portfolios would facilitate a professor in establishing rapport and motivating college students to be successful in a teacher preparation program. A portfolio was developed for each county courthouse in the resident state. For out-of-state students, general information was gathered about the state or principal cities in the state. The basic question was, "Given that the professor had visited the students' county courthouses and compiled portfolios on them, would the students show major interest in photos and data on their respective county courthouse? And if so, would there be evidence of heightened rapport between the professor and the students and motivation for them to perform at a high level in the course?"

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature addresses the basic areas of investigation in the study. The topical areas include the establishment and appreciation for courthouses, portfolios as a learning tool, significance of rapport in the teaching-learning environment, and impact of motivation on learning.

Establishment and Appreciation for Courthouses

In Europe, cathedrals and palaces are the great buildings of a community, whereas in the United States, security and organization are found in county courthouses (Keen, 2011; Utley & Brinkman, 2005). Courthouses are important symbols of government and democracy and people are very proud of them. People readily identify with their courthouses because they represent the cornerstones of civilization and serve as landmarks and icons in their communities (Keen, 2011). Courthouses are often viewed as temples of justice, representing the collective spirit of an era and a people (Utley & Brinkman, 2005). For example, Oxford, Mississippi's downtown area is built around its centerpiece, the Lafayette County Courthouse. The white-plastered brick courthouse frequently appears like a dream symbol in William Faulkner's work (Ward, 1994).

Courthouses in the United States were mandated by the legislature when sufficient communities in a given area warranted development of government (Utley & Brinkman, 2005). One of the first actions taken when a county was established was the selection of a site for the county seat and the building of a courthouse, a building devoted to the conduct of judicial affairs (Feathers, 2008). Courthouses began to reflect such public concerns as growth, permanence, and security (Utley & Brinkman, 2005). As for architecture and beauty, some courthouses do not offer very much, but others represent a coming together of the community and are gorgeous buildings (Taylor, 2010).

Keith Vincent (n.d.) may be considered a county courthouse expert. He has collected postcards of county courthouses for over 20 years; collecting over 14,000 cards, at least one from every county (or parish) in the country. He has traveled to over 2500 counties in 44 states. The traveling provides him with a genuine love for various parts of the country and small towns. Taylor (2010) further described Vincent's work, positing how county courthouses live on through his postcards.

Specific to the current study, a complete list of courthouses in Mississippi along with the city or town in which they are located was presented at <http://www.serv-now.com/resources/court-houses/mississippi>. This source, website <http://www.co.jasper.ms.us/courthouses.html>, and official state maps showed that there were 92 courthouses among the 82 counties in Mississippi. Ten Mississippi counties have dual county seats, mainly due to the division of court districts. For example, Jasper County has a courthouse in Bay Springs and another in Paulding, though it has a relatively small population. In addition to legislative action, it was stated that while Paulding was settled in 1833, it was 1935-36 that a road was built from Bay Springs to Rose Hill, the first road connecting the two districts. Thus, it was essential, especially in earlier years, to have two courthouses to provide governmental services for residents in Jasper County.

Portfolios as a Learning Tool

A teaching portfolio may be defined as a collection of documents and evidence of a teacher's knowledge, experience, and ability. It was adapted from professions such as art, photography, fashion, advertising, and architecture. Portfolios are now used extensively in teacher education for both formative (student professional growth and development) and summative (exit or employment) purposes. Formative portfolios generally are designed to enhance teacher candidates' understanding of their own development as beginning teachers, whereas summative portfolios are designed to show "best practices" in regard to readiness to teach. Different portfolio applications call for various entries such as lesson plans, observation

notes, pictures, audio- and videotapes, etc. (Meeus, Petegem, & Engels, 2009; Tigelaar, Dolmans, de Grave, Wolfhagen, & van der Vleuten, 2006; Wray, 2008).

A learning portfolio enables preservice teachers to develop and become aware of their own identity as teachers and learners. Establishment of a clear purpose for the portfolio determines the type of portfolio to be created, facilitates the selection of artifacts and the forms of evidence to be included, helps to direct the organization and structure of the portfolio, and assists in determining the type of support required (Wray, 2008). Portfolios are valuable for professional development because they encourage active and self-directed learning and reflective practice (Tigelaar et al., 2006). They stimulate candidates to think more carefully about their teaching and subject matter, influence classroom practices, increase teachers' self-confidence, and enlighten teachers about what is expected of them as professionals. Portfolio structuring may vary from highly directive and detailed instructions to total freedom for portfolio makers. Evidence in a portfolio may vary from a prescribed limited set of specific samples of a person's work to an eclectic collection of evidential materials. Balance should be obtained between prescribing every detail and leaving it completely open-ended. Social interaction facilitates portfolio learning, as when teachers discuss their portfolios with colleagues and others (Tigelaar et al., 2006).

In the context of performance-based assessment, a portfolio allows preservice teachers to demonstrate what they know and what they are able to do. It can provide a dual focus on basic knowledge retention as well as the application and demonstration of teaching-related skills that span an entire teacher education program and beyond. One strength of portfolios in teacher education is the connection that students make between their professional growth that occurs as a result of coursework and fieldwork during the process of learning to teach (Fiedler, Mullen, Finnegan, 2009; Wray, 2008).

According to Jones (2010), a number of benefits have been reported for the use of portfolios in assessment. Students take greater responsibility for their learning. This occurs through the decision-making process involved in selecting evidence and reflecting on what that evidence demonstrates. The author went on to describe the preparation of a portfolio as a theoretical act because the process of selecting and reflecting on evidence requires compilers to make decisions based on their personal theory of what is worthy of inclusion. Reflection occurs at three stages of the portfolio process: during selection of evidence, during annotation of evidence for presentation in the portfolio, and during conversations with peers, faculty advisers, and others about their portfolio entries (Jones, 2010). Cimer (2011) reported that the portfolio process, especially when combining self-reflection with weekly tests, encouraged students to study regularly, increased retention, and made learning more enjoyable. Also, the execution of a self-regulated learning process can be accurately assessed using portfolios (Meeus, Petegem, & Engels, 2009).

Given the importance of reflective teaching, many educators are using portfolios as means for preservice teacher reflection. A structured collection of teacher and student work created across diverse contexts, framed by reflection and enriched collaboration, can definitely advance teacher and student learning. More than anything else, the portfolio process should inspire reflection (Wray, 2008).

For this study, a portfolio is used to mean a collection of materials relative to a specific county courthouse. The portfolios were initially compiled by the professor as opposed to the students, though the students later provided input. While rather simplistic in design, the courthouse portfolios do adhere to many of the preparation criteria (a theoretical position, a

process of material selection, and an opportunity to reflect on the material) as listed by Jones (2010).

Significance of Rapport

Wilson, Ryan, and Pugh (2010) stated that rapport is positive relationship between the teacher and students. They listed ways to create rapport such as fair grading practices, treating all students with dignity, and other conduct that enhances the classroom milieu. Weimer (2010) posited that rapport is the ability to maintain harmonious relationships based on affinity. It often happens when two people are very much alike or have lots in common; a reason why it is not always easy for professors to establish rapport with students. Sometimes there is a big age difference between professors and students and other times they may have few, if any, shared interests. The author went on to state that there are good reasons for faculty to work on establishing rapport with students. The outcomes include higher motivation, increased comfort, higher quality, satisfaction, enhanced communication, and trust. While rapport does not result in learning, it certainly helps to create conditions conducive to learning. Teaching does not always result in learning, but like rapport, it is a factor that contributes positively to learning. Factors for building rapport are respect, approachability, open communication, caring, and positive attitude. It is important to realize that rapport is not something developed by announcement; it is developed by actions that result from things teachers do. Weimer (2010) stated that the good news is knowing empirically that teachers can do things to establish rapport; even better news is that the actions required are not so difficult to perform. According to Granitz, Koernig, and Harich (2009), when rapport exists between faculty and students, it can improve learning and produce other positive benefits. The authors developed a faculty-student model of rapport. It showed that approach, personality, and other human factors serve as antecedents to the development of rapport. These authors also found that student benefits from developed rapport included enhanced learning, greater involvement, and greater communication.

Sull (2006) posited that beyond the giving and taking of stats, facts, ideas, etc., when teachers inject themselves into the teaching experience and get students actively involved, it can quickly translate into a dynamic and exciting learning event. Cottringer and Sloan (2003) stated that good rapport helps to establish the necessary positive emotional climate to facilitate effective learning. Without excellent rapport, the influence of a good teacher and the impact of quality training are diminished. Rapport represents a harmonious connection between people and at the heart of it is trust. The authors noted that without basic trust, there is no rapport, and without rapport, learning is less predictable. It takes effort to learn about students in order to make a better connection with them and achieve the ultimate goal of excellent rapport, which is peak intimacy. This is when people are very connected, trust is at its best, and great communication occurs, even without words. Other ways to uncover natural rapport are: learn names, recognize the different readiness levels, use humor (it establishes a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere), be available, flexible, accommodating, understanding and forgiving, reinforce positive behavior, share personal insights and experiences (they facilitate trust), and remember what being a student is like (Cottringer & Sloan, 2003).

Meija (1996) offered successful steps to becoming a more relevant and contemporary instructor. They included: (1) the teacher should let students know that he or she is human (has problems finding a parking spot), (2) teach accountability with empathy (the teacher has dealt with many of the same academic problems that students now face), and (3) be current with the times (know about world, state and local events). The author posited that teachers should

evaluate their rapport with students, the goal being for students to see them as human beings who are interested in the subject matter of the course, the world, and them.

Buskist and Saville (2001) reported that rapport contributed to effective teaching, but in their study found that only slightly more than half of the students reported having experienced rapport with a professor. Factors that the students identified as contributing to the development of rapport included showing a sense of humor, availability outside class time, encouraging class discussion, showing interest in them, knowing students' names, sharing personal insights and experiences, relating material in everyday terms, and understanding that students occasionally have problems that hinder course progress. The students further reported that the most common positive effects of rapport on their academic behavior were increased enjoyment of the teacher and subject matter, motivation to come to class more often, and to pay more attention in class. The authors reported that rapport seemed to facilitate both student motivation for learning and their enjoyment of the course, and enhances student receptivity to what is being taught. Wilson, Ryan, and Pugh (2010) showed where student reports led to a list of teacher qualities that build rapport. The qualities were, according to order, encouraging, open-mindedness, creative, interesting, accessible, happy, having a good personality, promoting class discussion, approachability, concern for students, and fairness.

Motivation and Learning

Motivation is very important for student learning, in as much as students who have high motivation to achieve generally do well academically, whereas students with low motivation do not do well academically (Wang, 2012). Motivating college students is an essential goal for educators in higher education institutions. Effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to maintain the interest that brought students to the course in the first place. Learning is most compelling when students are curious about the lesson and when the activity is appropriately challenging. Wang (2012) found that students expressed feeling proud, satisfied and important when they learned something new, acquired new skills, and when they shared this knowledge with other people. To encourage students to become self-motivated independent learners, instructors can give frequent, positive feedback that supports students' beliefs that they can do well. They can also ensure opportunities for students' success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult, help students find personal meaning and value in the material, and create an open and positive atmosphere to help students feel that they are valued members of a learning community (Halawah, 2011).

According to Halawah (2011), students respond positively to a well-organized course taught by an enthusiastic instructor who has a real interest in students and what they learn. Given the different factors affecting college students' lives, motivating them is an essential role of every teacher for a successful teaching-learning environment. Teachers need strategies that help students build self-esteem and confidence. The author found that teachers who were open-minded, friendly, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable about students' names and interests demonstrated several of the personal qualities that motivated students the most. College teachers might enhance students' motivation by allowing student input and by maintaining a flexible class environment. Active lessons connecting to the real world promote motivation and excitement for learning. Cleland (2012) described learning-motivated students as those who are inquisitive and open to new ideas; think for themselves; research topics of interest above and beyond the minimums required; are interested in the world outside of campus; and find things to be

passionate about. These learning-motivated students often turn out to be lifelong learners and interesting people, who also seem to earn good grades and find their way into satisfying careers.

According to Hung, Hwang, and Huang (2012), project-based learning enhances the collaboration and the cooperation between group members, reinforcing learning cognition, and promoting learning achievement. Project-based cooperative learning develops trust among members so that, through face-to-face interactions, the effect of individual performance on the group is stressed and, by mutual supervision and reflection, the effect of collaborative learning is ensured. There are five elements for collaborative learning: active trust, face-to-face interaction, individual performance, interpersonal and group skills, and group process. Based on individual prior knowledge and previous experiences, new individual knowledge or new wisdom is generated by assimilation, adjustment, and organization of the environment in the process of interaction (Hung et al., 2012).

Lei (2010) stated that motivation is an internal state that arouses learners, steers them in particular directions, and keeps them engaged in certain activities. It often determines whether and to what extent students actually learn a challenging task. Once college students have learned how to do something successfully, motivation is largely responsible for whether they continue to do it. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are the two major categories with which college students are engaged in the process of learning new knowledge and skills. The author goes on to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in relation to student learning (achievement and performance) from the perspectives of college instructors (Lei, 2010).

Some educators advocate a student-centered environment, though the extent to which this occurs in the college classroom is limited (Myers, 2008). Learning and educational theories - metacognition, cognition, and multicultural - contend that student development and learning are improved when curricula assess and incorporate students' goals and priorities. The current study is supported by the cognitive model which posits that the assessment of students' prior knowledge and experiences is important to their development and faculty can link the presentation of new information and knowledge in class to the students' existing knowledge. Prior knowledge includes the subjective information and experiences that each student brings with him or her into the course. Curriculum that is informed by and linked to the students' prior goals and perceptions may enhance the development and learning processes of each student (Myers, 2008).

METHOD

The portfolio model was used to deliver material to establish rapport and motivate college students in this study. The literature review shows extensive use of the technique in teacher preparation programs. The types of portfolios include entrance (college), developmental/learning, inquiry-based, thematic, reflective, certification/assessment, employment, and professional (Wray, 2008). The courthouse portfolio for this study would best be considered a cross between the thematic (one main area of interest) and reflective (connections between prior and new knowledge and experiences) types. Contents for thematic and reflective portfolios include self-selected evidence such as journal entries, video/audiotaped material, observation notes, and assessment tools (Wray, 2008). The courthouse portfolios included researched data, observation findings, photos, and use of selected classroom assessments.

Courthouse Visits and Portfolio Development

In February 2008, the author (accompanied by his wife, and sometimes, grandchildren) set out on an odyssey to visit all courthouses in the state of Mississippi. No time frame was set for completing the task. Initially, the intended benefits were personal, but they instantly turned professional as it was realized that the experience stood to impact the author's college teaching. Thought was given to a systematic way of collecting data on each courthouse. Vincent, a renowned courthouse visitor, mainly collected postcards and took pictures. When he traveled to visit courthouses, in earlier years he took his parents along as a vacation for them. His images are mostly used on courthouse calendars and in county and court websites for others to enjoy (Taylor, 2010). For this study the portfolio concept was embraced. The portfolio included a photo with the name of the courthouse (either from the courthouse building or a marker on the grounds), a photo of the wife (and grandchildren when there) posed in front of the courthouse, a photo of the author (and grandchildren when there) posed in front of the courthouse, and an illustration outlining the county's location in the state. On the latter, the particular county was highlighted; then printed on the same were the county courthouse name, the city/town and its population, and the date of the visit.

The plan of action was to first identify or recognize available time to visit a courthouse or several of them. Thought was given to trying to cover adjacent counties on the same trip and to especially cover out-of-the-way counties to reduce the amount of drive time. A basic tool used was a current state map. It provided the counties, the city of the county seat/courthouse, and the city's population. It took a while to reach the final decision of what to include in the portfolio, so some backtracking had to take place to bring earlier portfolio entries up to current standards. Entries were generally made when a roll of film was processed. The original idea was to have one photo album. But it was later realized that the material was too indispensable for one copy; there should be two duplicate albums, reserved at separate locations. The way the films were processed, there were still extra photos which went toward preparation of a third album.

The original camera used was 35 millimeters. Later a digital camera was also used. It is advisable to use more than one camera in an undertaking such as this project. A malfunction using a single device can be devastating, as this turned out to be the case in one situation.

The first courthouse visit began on the hills of a professional conference. The author made a presentation at the National Association of African American Studies (NAAAS) conference in Baton Rouge, LA. The return home trip on February 13, 2008 was mapped to cover a few courthouses in the mid-southwest portion of Mississippi, starting with Wilkinson County Courthouse in Woodville; then to Amite and other adjacent counties. But "believe it or not" occurred. In Amite County, it was discovered that the camera was empty of film. So there were no pictures of Wilkinson County Courthouse. The 35 millimeter camera was film loaded and the Amite County Courthouse in Liberty (population 633) became the first official courthouse visit of record. On this same date the Pike County Courthouse in Magnolia (population 2,071) was visited. These courthouses were real nice buildings and served as motivation for continuation of the project. A detailed accounting of all the courthouse visits is beyond the scope of this manuscript.

The courthouse visitation goal was reached when the author and his wife arrived at the Hinds County-Raymond Courthouse on August 21, 2011. This was the 92nd courthouse of the 92 courthouses among the 82 counties in the state of Mississippi that they had visited. The couple had gone "over hills and over dales" to reach their goal that was begun more than three

years ago (Ruben & Bessie, 2011). However, putting the finishing touch on the portfolios continued, and they remain a work in progress as the author studies ways to make them as available as possible and technologically interactive for class use and for use by other persons of potential interest.

The portfolios are alike in terms of the four major components, three pictures and an illustration. Figure 1 (Appendix A) is a sample portfolio. In the example, the identification marker contains considerable information of interest. From it a person can learn a lot about the role of key people and construction of the facility. Each courthouse seems beautiful in its own way and is often the centerpiece of the town or city. The illustration specifies the location of the county in the state, the city's population, and the date the courthouse was visited.

Class Use of the Portfolios

The initial class for use of the county courthouse portfolios was an exceptional children course with 30 teacher education candidates who were taught by the author. Early in the session the professor distributed a survey form (Residential Status of Students) to ascertain from state residents the county in which they graduated high school and from out-of-state students the state and city in which they graduated high school. Each student was also requested to state something special about their county or city, or their state if they were nonresidents. This information was tabulated and used to personalize distribution of the county courthouse portfolios and to use as feasible in subsequent discussions.

Some "ice breakers" were used to call the portfolios to the attention of the students. A standard procedure in the class was to have students introduce themselves, indicating their major, hometown, and other information that they would like to share. The professors would at times make mention of something in their hometown that was surprising to the students. He would then ask "If I demonstrate that I have walked a mile in your shoes, will you join me in running a marathon for children in our schools?" While no direct responses were solicited, the statement got considerable facial expressions of an inquisitive nature.

RESULTS

Visiting the courthouses was met with 100% success. There was so much to see and to learn. There were also opportunities to meet and talk with interesting people. Some local residents gave information that they figured visitors might not know, for example, pointing out that some counties had two courthouses. On the very last visit, a county resident saw the investigators looking and taking pictures, she made the block and asked to take a photo with the two on it in front of the courthouse. She also encouraged the investigators to contact the editor of the local paper as she would be interested in the story. The investigators followed her recommendation and the project did get coverage (Ruben & Bessie, 2011). The investigators also came upon some good food as they traveled the state.

There were some let downs along the way. As stated above, on one occasion, pictures were supposedly taken but the camera had no film in it. There remains one courthouse portfolio short of two photos (Franklin County Courthouse). A few courthouses (for example, Copiah and Covington) have poor exposure as it was almost dark when the investigators visited them (some thought was to revisit them, but leaving them as they are show authenticity in the visits). In

some instances, trying to visit too many courthouses in one day wore a little thin the nerves of the investigators.

For use of the portfolios in the classroom, it was discovered that there was reasonable spread among counties for in-state residents, as shown in Table 1 (Appendix B). Forty-three percent of the candidates were from Hinds County and the other in-state residents were spread across twelve (12) other counties. Ten percent of the students were from out-of-state, representing three different states (Florida, Illinois, and Tennessee).

A compilation was made of the “Major things students remembered about their county/state,” as provided in Table 2 (Appendix C). Most of the comments were positive in nature; they referenced such things as people, nature, facilities, weather, and even the county being home of a celebrity. Only one comment was considered a complaint (roads are terrible). An out-of-state resident heralded her city as a tourist attraction.

The classroom experience was exciting. To sometimes keep the class’s attention, the professor would make a statement and ask the class if it were “fact” or “fiction?” When the professor first stated that he had visited all courthouses in Mississippi to walk a mile in their shoes, because he sensed that one day they would come to the university and be in his class and asked, “Fact” or “fiction,” they did not much believe it was true. But afterward, it was an atmosphere where nothing appeared impossible.

The students rallied to the information about their county. They discovered that others were from their county and that they should get to know each other. Even more surprising was the notion that they wanted their county to be best represented in the class in terms of performance.

Assessment of the use of the portfolios was made after eleven (11) class sessions, approximately two months, into the semester. Particular indicators, as shown in Table 3 (Appendix D), indicated that the rapport between the professor and students was associated with considerable achievement. Class attendance and participation were at a very acceptable level. On daily average, 92% of the students were in attendance. Individual student attendance ranged from 18% to 100% (only two students had very poor attendance). An overwhelming majority of the students purchased the textbook (87%). Collective assignment submission was 90%; individual submissions ranged from 20% to 100%. Performance achievement overall was barely acceptable (71%). It should be considered that the professor has a reputation for holding students to high academic standards. However, individual performance ranged from 13% to 92%. As for out-of-class relationship, the professor experienced an increase in requests to complete recommendation forms and to advise in the search for specific information.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

It took a labor of love to engage in a project of such magnitude as this one. But many of the tenets of motivation discussed in this manuscript manifested themselves. If the author had been extrinsically motivated, no one could have paid him enough to make the pursuit. But under the intrinsic motivation mode, once started, a mighty force could not have stopped him. The courthouse odyssey proved to be an exhilarating venture which combined both personal interest and professional work. Most importantly, when the portfolios were developed and brought to the classroom, rapport between the professor and students reached new heights.

Obviously, visiting 92 courthouses is not for every professional. But this manuscript can be used as a reference to enhance faculty-student rapport and serve as encouragement to develop other strategies for motivating students to achieve success.

In summary, the author visited all courthouses in the state of Mississippi, developed portfolios for each, and strategically used them in the classroom to develop rapport and motivate college students to achieve excellence in their teacher education coursework. The initial use of the strategy was considered a success, in terms of specific indicators (class attendance, acquisition of textbooks, assignment submission, and to a modest extent, performance achievement). There appeared to be room for making the material more accessible and thereby, an opportunity to increase its utility.

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