

Family & School Time Capsule Project Described 8-30-24

The Family & School Time Capsule Project started in Dallas ISD at Quintanilla Middle School in 2005 as a writing project to motivate students toward graduation. It started with a large vault in the school lobby as the Time Capsule to hold letters 8th graders wrote to themselves planning 10-years into their future for 10-year class reunions.

Immediately positive student achievements began. In 2009 letters from parents to their child about parental dreams for them were added. In 2010 Sunset High School noticed Quintanilla students were better motivated and quickly started their own Time Capsule Project. Graduation rates went from 40% in 2004 to over 75% by 2015!

The Project moved to more schools. By 2019 vaults were in 18 schools, 5 high schools, 10 middle schools, and 3 elementary schools, in West Dallas and Oak Cliff. The Sunset Graduation rate was 90%!

As academic achievement rose behavior problems decreased in schools where the letters were most regularly written each year. Student behavior improved as students focused more on their own family roots and personal life goals. Fighting and pregnancies in secondary schools decreased. The quality of student goals improved as students began to exchange letters with each parent and grandparent, and as letter writing spread to all grades in a school. Student writing ability also improved.

But the Covid-19 Pandemic struck in 2020! All letter writing stopped in the 6 active middle schools. Achievement fell.

We are now in the process of restarting all 18 projects with all the improvements developed before the Pandemic hit. This includes an annual letter writing by each parent and grandparent for potentially 14 years from Pre-k through 12th grade.

This will require two or more (one for about every 60 students) parent volunteer School Time Capsule Postmasters for each grade in each of the 18 schools. These volunteers manage the letters and help them follow the parents and students year to year. It is ideal for these volunteers to be parents with a child in the grade they will work with. They will go forward with their child's grade helping this priceless letter writing happen every year. They will store the letters from their child's class in the school's time capsule vault. In 11 months, they return the envelopes to each student before next year's first of the two writing classes.

Students always read the new letters they receive from a parent or grandparent immediately upon receiving them. The goal is to ask the writer questions they may have from the letter during this meeting. Hopefully this leads to priceless conversations about family history and student goals.

Students mature more rapidly in this process of exchanging such valuable written information over time. Focusing on family roots and goals with the most important people in their lives is priceless for students, parents, and grandparents!