

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

Together, We are the Champions for Children in Poughkeepsie City School District

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Bolin property plan to be discussed

The Poughkeepsie City School District, along with Triton Construction and CPL Architects and Engineers, is inviting city residents to public forums to discuss details of the district's vision for transforming its 11 College Ave. property.

The site is currently occupied by the Jane Bolin Administration Building, district bus depot, and maintenance and facilities offices.

The forum will showcase project details and district officials will address residents' questions. The district will collect comments from community members to better inform the project moving forward.

Under the Strong Schools Equal Strong Communities Capital Improvement Project, the district is proposing substantial improvements to the Jane Bolin building, which will involve partial demolition and transforming the remaining building structure in the following ways:

- The building will house the district's departments of transportation, buildings and grounds, localizing these interdependent functions in a modernized facility.
- The site will be reconstructed to provide off-street parking and secure the district's property.
- The new facility will allow for better maintenance of the district's transportation fleet and will provide a workshop space to facilitate in-house maintenance of all buildings, including plumbing, electrical and carpentry.

The Poughkeepsie City School District has been making great strides in transforming all district schools into 21st-century learning environments under the Strong Schools Equal Strong Communities Capital Improvement Project. The district's goal is to create learning environments that maximize student potential and support the beauty of the surrounding community.

The first public forum will be held 6 p.m. Thursday, April 25, and the second will be held 10 a.m. Saturday, April 27. Both forums will be at the Poughkeepsie Middle School, located at 55 College Ave.



Above: The current architectural rendering of the plans for the Jane Bolin Administration Building property. Below: The property at 11 College Ave.



The students of Sister 2 Sister speak to the Sisters of Steel.

Sisters of Steel formed at Clinton

Sister 2 Sister has made an impact on Oliva Groucher's life.

The empowerment club, which operates at Poughkeepsie's high and middle schools, strives to support female students through open discussion, guest speakers and community service projects.

Most of the friends she's made in high school, Groucher said, have come through Sister 2 Sister.

"The bond is the most important part of the club," she said.

The bond was recently expanded with the creation of a sister club aimed at aiding students at the elementary level. In February, Sisters of Steel was launched at Clinton Elementary. The goal, Clinton Community Schools liaison Lesley Rodriguez said, was to create a club to help develop students' social skills, while also providing a sense of belonging and mentorship from the Sister 2 Sister high schoolers.

Seven Clinton students attended the meeting in February. In March, the number grew to 17. In that second meeting, "you could tell the girls were becoming a little more outspoken, both high school and elementary."

Both Rodriguez and Takiyah Ingram, faculty advisor for the high school club, touted the relationship between the clubs as being reciprocal. The high school group creates lesson plans for their Clinton counterparts and gains experience communicating. "It's a balance," Rodriguez said. "It helps the girls from the high school become a mentor and just kind of collaborate with them."

In deciding how to shape the high school group's meetings, Ingram said she tries to think about what and who she needed at that age that could have provided her with the tools to succeed. She said her students can do the same for the girls at Clinton.

"The most important thing is the relationship building. You're in elementary school and you're just a little girl in school trying to figure it out," Ingram said. "I think our girls have a lot to offer."

Groucher, the Class of 2024 valedictorian, said she enjoys seeing how happy the Clinton girls are to see her group, remembering she was once like that with older students.

"I like just knowing that they see where they can be in a couple years, and be that person that helps them see the future," she said.

Rodriguez said she has already seen some students begin to come out of their shell.

"We have one girl who just speaks Spanish. There's a girl in the high school group who is bilingual, so she was able to communicate with the student here," Rodriguez said. "This is like having a sister role model in the high school, to help them embrace themselves and find themselves."

Already, the Community Schools Department and other school officials are looking into how the program could be expanded to the other district elementary schools.

The hope is for the elementary groups to feed in to the middle school and eventually high school Sister 2 Sister groups, giving students a sense of familiarity and stability throughout their time learning in the district.

"We are a community. But Poughkeepsie is big," Rodriguez said. "This helps them go up to the next grade level with the confidence that they have their mentor."



Above: Members of Sister 2 Sister, Sisters of Steel and school leadership pose together after the Sisters of Steel's inaugural meeting in February. Right: Sisters of Steel take part in the activity planned by Sister 2 Sister.





Festival to highlight students, artists, filmmakers, music

The idea behind this weekend's PKX Festival is simple: "It's a festival for the youth and it's made by the youth," said Tahleeya Raphael, one of several Poughkeepsie High School students involved with planning The Art Effect's three-day event. "It's for people to come and enjoy themselves and experience what Poughkeepsie could be." The festival, which will be centered in and around The Trolley Barn at 489 Main St., will showcase the art and creativity of Poughkeepsie's teen and youth population, while providing free entertainment.

According to The Art Effect, which is putting on the festival with 12 community partner groups, more than 40 local teenagers in its Youth Workforce Development Programs had a hand in the planning and executing the third-annual event. The theme of this year's edition, "Droppin' Jewels," "emphasizes the valuable gems found within the community – the nameless heroes, families, and friends who contribute to the city's greatness for present and future generations," according to a release from The Art Effect. Many of the activities were meant to bring people together.

"We made a thing where you can make a drawing and pass it around and everyone adds something," said Raphael, a senior at Poughkeepsie. "It becomes a bonding activity."

The festival begins 6 p.m. Thursday, April 18, with the opening of a teen art exhibition. Twenty-three teen artists are exhibiting pieces. A pop-up fashion show featuring young designers is also scheduled for 7:15 p.m. An international short film festival 6 p.m. Friday, will not only feature films produced by young creators from places such as Japan, Spain and Portugal, but also the work of City of Poughkeepsie teens who collaborated with filmmaker and Poughkeepsie High School alumni Hezues R. on a film "The Last String." There will also be a Q&A with the local filmmakers and an awards presentation.

Malika Oszip, a Poughkeepsie High School senior, was among those who had a hand in creating "The Last String," as well as a music video that will be shown at the event. Both projects, she said, advocate for teens to resist the urge to party, smoke and do drugs.

Oszip, a member of The Art Effect's Spark Studios and other creative groups, hopes the festival gets "teens to want to help join in making films, art, get people excited about these things."

Raphael noted the film festival has, in past years, been a favorite for kids, who get to watch a slew of movies for free. But, she said, Saturday is the day not to miss.

"That's when the festival is actually happening. People are outside on the stage, there's a DJ, we're going to have activity tables, you get to talk to amazing people, make connections, there will be food trucks outside," she said. "Everyone can just come in and enjoy themselves."

She noted the food trucks will be the one aspect of the festival that is not free.

The Saturday portion will run from 2 to 6 p.m. and feature activities and informational aspects from a long list of community contributors including the Poughkeepsie High School Art Club, Poughkeepsie Farm project, Celebrating African Spirit, Fall Kill Creative Works, The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center and others. At 4 p.m. The Art Effect's MADLab youth artists will unveil and discuss a public art sculpture.

"We wanted to make activities for everyone to do," Raphael said. "It's something to come to that's healthy for a couple hours – run outside with their friends out in the sunlight instead of staying in the house all the time. This generation needs that. There's not always fun things to do outside all the time, so this is important for Poughkeepsie's youth."

Learn more at thearteffect.org/tae-events/pkx/

