



With construction on Eccleston Elementary underway, Orange schools tout job creation

Construction, Lauren Roth, Orange County schools — posted by Iroth on January, 8 2013 5:50 PM

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With the Eccleston Elementary construction site as a backdrop, School Board member Kat Gordon talks about school construction with school officials and a contractor around her

Orange School Board member Kat Gordon had to fight some of her own constituents to do it, but she's getting a new Eccleston Elementary built. On Tuesday, flanked by two other board members, the superintendent, district officials and a contractor, Gordon stood outside the partially-constructed school to tout the district's construction program.

Not only has the district directly created 5,566 jobs this school year through construction on 12 schools, but it has done so with about 40 percent women or minority-owned or small local businesses, well above a district goal of 23 percent.

"They said it couldn't be done, but with the help of the community, look what we are putting here," Gordon said.

Chief Operations Officer John Morris said the district is doing more with less, shaving \$17.2 million in costs off a \$660,681,553 budget for its 18 most recent school construction projects.

In addition to the jobs created this year, the district's construction program created 3,702 jobs directly. The district also has also created thousands of jobs indirectly and supported economies around its construction sites, district officials said.

Bob Lipscomb, president of the Williams Company, said that district construction projects have been key to his company's success since the economic downturn. "For us it's about keeping local people on the job and helping the local economy," he said.

Gordon has at times struggled to sell members of her own community on her plan: building new, larger Eccleston and Washington Shores elementaries and closing Richmond Heights Elementary. For her, Tuesday was a bit of vindication.

"When they see this, they won't want to stay" in their old, dilapidated schools, she said.
