



DICK J. BATCHELOR
MICHAEL J. MURPHY
DUSTIN A. WATKINS

Change 4 Kids

In 2002 Orange County Public Schools faced a crisis. Our schools were bursting at the seams and our existing school infrastructure was dilapidated and in desperate need of renovation, but we lacked the funding to pursue the needed new schools and to renovate our existing schools. Dick Batchelor, widely recognized as Central Florida's leading child advocate and a highly regarded business and community leader, stepped up and agreed to lead the campaign to raise the money needed to improve our public schools. Due to his stature in our community and his consensus building skills, our community coalesced around Dick Batchelor's vision for Orange County Public Schools and as a result of his leadership passed the Change 4 Kids sales tax referendum, an initiative which has generated over \$2 billion in new funding for the renovation and construction of public schools. Today, Orange County Public Schools and its capital program are the envy of the State of Florida thanks to the compassion and leadership of Dick Batchelor.

- Bill Sublette, Chair, Orange County School Board

As board member of the Orlando Regional Chamber of Commerce, I recognized that the public school system had two main construction challenges. First, the Orange County Public School System had so many students that they needed to build 50 new schools, but had only enough money to build 25 schools. There was no dedicated funding source to build the other 25 schools, to accommodate the needs of all students. Second, and as important to me, there were about 136 schools that were in some state of disrepair, some minor, some very major, including some that needed to be totally replaced. A good number of these schools also happened to be in some of the poorest districts.

After six referendum efforts had failed to generate some level of taxation to support public schools, I volunteered to create and lead Change 4 Kids. This effort engaged, in the broadest sense of the word, the communities at large to garner support for a half-penny sales tax in Orange County. I raised more than half a million dollars for the campaign, but this was not a solo effort. Working with myriad organizations and people to engage the community, we brought together hundreds of individuals representing hundreds of organizations. In doing so, we were able to get the business community, the civic community, the school system, the parent-teacher organizations (PTAs), and labor unions – as a disparate a group as you could define – to set aside their differences and focus on this one need for the children.

In fact, at our first meeting we had the Associated General Contractors and the Associated Building Contractors, but we also had the Building Trade Union and the Teachers Union. My approach was simple: “Look, we’re going to set aside our differences and focus on this one need for the children. I guarantee you, when the polls close on September the 10th at 7 p.m., you can go back to fighting each other. This referendum has to pass.”

Dick J. Batchelor, Michael J. Murphy, and Dustin A. Watkins prepared this case. DBMG cases are developed solely as the basis for marketing. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements, sources of primary data, or illustrations of effective or ineffective management.

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The real success here was getting these very divergent communities to be engaged – keeping in mind that only 25 percent of the people in Orange County have kids in public school. But we were able to bring these very different groups together, including labor unions with business organizations, teachers with parents, political leaders, and the communities at large who had no children in public school, to demonstrate the absolute need that, short of a half-penny sales tax, these schools would continue to fall down.

Ultimately, the referendum passed with almost 60 percent of the vote, and, once passed, the half-penny sales tax was projected to raise more than \$2 billion to construct new schools and refurbish old schools. That year, the Orlando Sentinel named me “Central Floridian of the Year” for my successful efforts.

– **Dick Batchelor**

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