

Stronger Together: Highlights from the SDPBC 2026 Construction Summit

On Wednesday, February 25, the energy was high as the School District of Palm Beach County's Office of Small Business Development hosted its 2026 Construction Summit. The theme, *"Building the Construction Pipeline: How Opportunities Flow, Grow, and Scale,"* was about more than just business, it was about making sure everyone, from big prime contractors to small local trades and even our students, has a seat at the table.

The day brought together District leaders and contractors of all sizes to talk honestly about how work gets awarded and how local firms can grow alongside the District.

The heart of the summit was the panel discussions that skipped the fluff and got straight to the point. Industry leaders from Moss & Associates, Pirtle Construction, Woodland Concrete, and B&I Contractors shared the "how-to" of partnerships. They broke down what the "big players" actually look for when hiring and how smaller firms can stay visible and bid-ready.

While the pros were busy in strategy sessions with leaders like Paul Carty (SCEC) and Wayne Messam (Messam Construction) taking a deeper dive into the morning topics of the construction ecosystem, the next generation was getting a head start.

Students from Santaluces, William T. Dwyer, and Lake Worth High Schools were right in the mix. They attended a special session led by Adam Sonntag of Proctor Construction and Justin Kasper of Kasper Electric, where they explored different career paths—from being a project manager or superintendent to mastering "boots on the ground" trades.

The students also learned about programs that can move them straight into internships and apprenticeships. The biggest takeaway for many? The chance to get paid to learn. Students shared how much they appreciated hearing directly from industry pros about opportunities that provide the tools, transportation, and experience they need to jumpstart their careers.

The day ended with two important topics: upcoming opportunities with the District and Getting Paid. Facilities Construction gave the audience what they were waiting for, a glimpse into the short term projects and long term possibilities. Nicolas Tarrago from the OSBD joined forces with District Construction Finance to share critical updates on the payment process. They walked attendees through the latest improvements designed to keep the cash flowing and ensure our partners are paid accurately and on time.

Overwhelmingly, the feedback showed that attendees found immense value in every session and are already looking forward to returning. By bringing together today's experts and tomorrow's workforce, we aren't just building schools; we're building a sustainable pipeline of local talent and labor.

When our small businesses grow and our students are prepared to enter the field, the entire District wins.

A huge thank you to our numerous sponsors for making this day possible! Stay tuned for more information on upcoming workshops and how you can get involved in our future initiatives.

Check out our special section in the newsletter to learn about the 1st Annual SBE Subcontractor Awards—including a video highlight of our winners!