

Great Start Cohort - Presenters
December 16, 2020
Virtual Session

Session Facilitator

Kelly D. Smith

Director

Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors, LLC

Retired Superintendent, Belle Plaine Public Schools

Kelly.Smith@bakertilly.com

Dr. Kelly D. Smith is a Director at Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors, LLC (formerly Springsted). He previously served for 24 years as superintendent in Minnesota in several Greater Minnesota districts and is a past President of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA). Dr. Smith also has experience as a school district business manager in Minnesota.

Dr. Smith brings a number of skills to the Baker Tilly team including experience in school district re-organization, facilitating bond & operating levy campaigns, developing budgets and finding financial solutions to issues faced by school districts today.

Joe Gothard

Superintendent

Saint Paul Public Schools

360 Colborne Street

St. Paul, MN 55102

651-767-8152

joe.gothard@spps.org

Dr. Joe Gothard is Superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS), serving over 36,000 PreK-12 students and employing more than 5,700 staff. SPPS is the second-largest and most diverse school district in Minnesota.

Dr. Gothard launched the SPPS Achieves strategic plan in December 2018. The plan's guiding values are student achievement, communication, continuous improvement, collaboration, accountability and fostering an inclusive culture.

Prior to joining SPPS in 2017, Dr. Gothard served as Superintendent of Schools in the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191. Previously, he served as assistant superintendent, high school principal and middle school principal in Madison, Wisconsin.

Dr. Gothard is co-chair of the Generation Next Leadership Council, and a member of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts Executive Committee. He also serves on the Genesys Works Board of Directors and the Greater Twin Cities United Way Executive Committee.

Nichole Rens

Director of Curriculum & Instruction
St. Francis Area Schools
4111 Ambassador Blvd. NW
St. Francis, MN 55070-9668
763-753-7023
nichole.rens@isd15.org

Dr. Nichole Rens has been the director of curriculum and instruction for St. Francis schools since 2015. Prior to this position she was the principal of Lakeview Elementary School in the Robbinsdale Area School District from 2008-2015. Before her employment in the Robbinsdale Area Schools District, Dr. Rens worked for Brooklyn Center Schools first as an English teacher at Brooklyn Center High School and then as a curriculum coordinator for Earle Brown Elementary.

While at Brooklyn Center Schools and Robbinsdale Area Schools Dr. Rens led the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme at the elementary schools. She also traveled internationally as a trainer for the International Baccalaureate Programme and has provided workshops on magnet school programs.

Dr. Rens is an adjunct instructor for the University of St. Thomas as well as a member of the MASA Board of Directors.

Dr. Rens earned her B.A. in English from the College of St. Benedict, MN. She then earned her M.A., Ed.S, and EdD from the University of St. Thomas, MN.

Valerie Dosland

Government Affairs Director
Ewald Consulting
MASA Lobbyist
651-265-7857
valeried@ewald.com

Valerie Dosland is the Director of Government Affairs at Ewald Consulting, where she provides government relations and lobbying services to clients in the areas of early childhood and K-12 education. Valerie assists her clients in policy development, lobbying and monitoring of legislative activities as well as grassroots development and engagement. Prior to joining Ewald Consulting in 2005, she worked for nine years at the Minnesota House of Representatives as a research consultant specializing in the areas of early childhood and K-12 education. Valerie is a graduate of the University of Minnesota with a B.A., is an alumni of the U of M's Humphrey Policy Fellows program, and serves on the board of the YMCA Youth in Government Program.