

## Great Start Cohort - Presenter Biographies

August 20, 2020

Online 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.

#### **Deb Henton, Ed.D.**

Executive Director

Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA)

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Dr. Deb Henton was appointed Executive Director of MASA on July 1, 2020. She had been an active member of MASA participating on various committees and served as President of the association in 2018-19. During her presidency, Dr. Henton worked with the Board of Directors and the Executive Director to advance the initiatives in the MASA strategic plan and worked to outline an initiative to increase the number of female superintendents. As Executive Director, she will continue these efforts while also focusing on inclusion and equity.

Dr. Henton's prior experience includes a wide range of experiences at both the school district and state level. She has been a teacher, assistant principal, principal, executive director, chief of staff, and for thirteen years a school superintendent. Dr. Henton was appointed to two terms on the state Board of School Administrators by Governor Dayton and recently chaired the board before becoming Executive Director of MASA.

Dr. Henton is the recipient of a number of professional recognitions. In 2018, she was named the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year. In 2015, MASA's Region 6 awarded her as their Administrator of Excellence, and in 2014, she received MASA's Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award. She was named the 2011 eSchool News Tech-Savvy Superintendent and the 2013 Outstanding Service Award recipient from the Minnesota Service Cooperatives.

Dr. Henton received her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in 1999. She holds a master's degree in Educational Administration and a master's degree in Education, both from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. Dr. Henton's bachelor's degree in Broad Field Social Studies and History is from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

**Kirk Schneidawind**

Executive Director  
Minnesota School Boards Association  
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**Gary Lee**

Deputy Executive Director  
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**Kirk Schneidawind** has served as the executive director of the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) since July 2013. Kirk originally joined MSBA in 1999, working in governmental relations and policy development.

Kirk is the secretary of the Minnesota School District Liquid Asset Fund Plus and the secretary-treasurer of the Minnesota School Boards Association Insurance Trust. He serves on the Minnesota Government Relations Council Board of Directors and several other state committees. He is also the Chair-Elect of the Organization of State Association Executive Directors (OSAED).

Kirk received his bachelor's degree in history at Iowa State University, and his Master's Degree and school superintendent licensure from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

**Gary Lee** has 29 years of experience in private business — both in a large corporate setting and as an owner/president of small rural businesses. Gary is a former member of the Fertile-Beltrami School Board. Gary also served on the MSBA Board of Directors, the Northwest Service Cooperative Board of Directors, the Minnesota Service

Cooperatives Board of Directors, the MSBA Insurance Trust Board of Directors, and the Big Three working group. Gary joined MSBA in 2009.

### **RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE**

- Individual school board in-services: Superintendent Search and School Board-Superintendent Relationship
- MSBA workshops, seminars, and conferences:
  - o Teacher Development and Evaluation
  - o Area Negotiations
  - o Board Treasurers
  - o Strategic Planning
  - o Various Other Financial and Data Trainings
- Analyze superintendent employment contracts and nonlicensed master agreements
- Contributor to MSBA The Leader
- Daily telephone/email/facsimile responses to MSBA school board member questions

### **Bill Gronseth**

Superintendent  
St. Peter Public Schools  
100 Lincoln Dr. #229  
St. Peter, MN 56082  
District Phone: 507-934-5703  
bgronseth@stpeterschools.org

Bill Gronseth has served as a public educator for the past 27 years. He sees himself as a builder of people. Whether working with students, staff, or colleagues, he seeks to inspire, motivate and empower others to accomplish more than they believed they could. While Bill prefers to remain quietly humble, his skills as an educator, leader and communicator have been celebrated with several honors; most recently by the National School Public Relations Association's Gold Medallion Award. Bill is currently serving as Superintendent of Saint Peter Schools.

### **Jeff Elstad**

Superintendent  
Owatonna Public Schools  
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District Phone: 507-444-8601  
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Jeff Elstad has been a public educator for the past 27 years. He has been an early childhood special education teacher, speech and language pathologist, coach and administrator. He has proudly served as a Director of Special Services for the New Prague Area Schools, Assistant Principal at Owatonna High School, Principal at Willow

Creek Middle School (Rochester), superintendent for the Byron Public Schools and currently as the superintendent for the Owatonna Public Schools.

He has also been an adjunct faculty member of Concordia University – St. Paul and St. Thomas University teaching in both Education Leadership departments. He is currently serving as the MASA President for the 2020-2021 school year.

Although he enjoys a great career as a public educator, his favorite past times are being a husband to his awesome wife, Gina and dad to four fantastic children, Kirsten, Darik, Kaia, and Mikah.

### **David Law**

Superintendent

Anoka Hennepin School District

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Anoka, MN 55303

District Phone: 763-506-1001

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David Law is the superintendent for the Anoka-Hennepin School District. He earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Hamline University with a major in mathematics and a minor in education. He began his career as a middle school math teacher in 1991 in the Murrieta Valley School District in Murrieta, California. From 1992 to 1998, he taught math in the school he graduated from, Coon Rapids High School. In 1998 he began his administrative career working as a Dean of Students at Edgewood Middle School in the Mounds View School District. David earned his Juris Doctor from William Mitchell College of Law and also completed his K-12 Principal Licensure from the University of Minnesota in 2000. He became Assistant Principal at Sandburg Middle School in Anoka-Hennepin in 2000. In 2007 he became the Principal at Sunrise Park Middle School in the White Bear Lake Area School District. David completed his superintendent license at the University of Minnesota in 2010 and was promoted to the position of Assistant Superintendent for White Bear Lake where he stayed until 2014.

He has been an adjunct professor at both Bethel University in the Graduate School of Education and at the University of Minnesota in the Organizational Leadership and Policy Development department.

David has partnered with the University of Minnesota on several research projects focused on education reform and improvement. He currently serves on the Anoka Ramsey Community College Advisory Board, the American Heart Association Board and the Board of Directors for the Greater Twin Cities YMCA. Superintendent David Law has been named 2019-20 Superintendent of the Year by the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA).