



Contacts:

Jim Perry - Kensington Woods High School, principal (517-545-0828)
Michele Nickel-Frasz - Nickel Design, media contact (231-582-9299)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Formula for Calculating Graduation Rates Skewed
Area High School Maintains Commitment
to Students Regardless of Formula

HOWELL, MICHIGAN — August 27, 2008 — Many Michigan school districts cringed at the recent release of new data showing lower than expected graduation rates. The cause of the dismal ratings is the new state formula for calculating graduation rates as required under the No Child Left Behind Act. But Kensington Woods High School in Howell continues to focus on the product, rather than the numbers game, by supporting their students at all levels.

The new state formula for calculating graduation rates takes into account only those students who graduate in four years. Historically, many alternative students bring with them a host of issues that can stall their high school careers, meaning that they won't graduate on time in a four-year program. For many schools, graduation rates showed a decline because of the inclusion of alternative education students into the data.

In education, however, the numbers are sometimes all that are noticed. At Kensington Woods High School, graduation rates showed a decline because of the inclusion of students who didn't graduate within the state-determined four-year period. "Our day students have a graduation rate of 84%, higher than the state average, but the inclusion of our *FlexTrac* (night school) students makes it look like our graduation rates are 44%," says Kensington Woods Principal Jim Perry. "In reality, the numbers are skewed to reflect the slower—not lower—graduation rates of students." In fact, both segments of Kensington Woods keep pace with, or exceed the curriculum standards measured by the Michigan Merit Exam data. "Eighty percent of our 2008 graduating class headed to college, which is above the *national* high school average," adds Perry. Additionally, Kensington day students showed an average 18% gain in English, math, reading, science, writing, and social studies between 2007 and 2008, plus a two point ACT composite

increase. “These are exceptional programs, and this is in a climate where scores are pretty flat statewide and in Livingston County,” explains Perry. “The NCLB formula for managing data simply does not reflect that. We’re confident that our strong reputation, innovative curriculum, and college-prep focus will continue to attract high caliber students to our traditional program, regardless of the state numbers.”

Unlike some area schools that dropped their alternative programs to bolster their ratings, Kensington is keeping their FlexTrac program, an alternative day and evening program, despite the methods used to record state graduation rates. “We will continue to offer our FlexTrac program regardless of how it adversely affects our numbers,” says Perry. “We still feel a responsibility to provide an education to those students who want to finish high school but don’t fit the traditional high school mold.” FlexTrac’s 11:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. schedule allows alternative students flexibility in finishing high school requirements while still working or taking care of family, which ultimately leads to a longer high school career.

“Frankly, we don’t feel that there should be a stigma attached to a high school that offers students extra time and flexibility in graduating,” says Theresa Merrill, Kensington Woods school counselor. “It is not at all unusual for college students to graduate in their fifth year, or beyond; why should it be any different for high schoolers?”

For more information about Kensington Woods High School, visit kwoods.org, or contact Principal Jim Perry at 517-545-0828 or via email at info@kensingtonwoodshs.com. Kensington Woods is located on the campus of Cleary University at 3700 Cleary Drive, Howell, Michigan 48843.

-end-

*Kensington Woods High School is a college preparatory,
tuition-free, state-funded high school.*

Kensington Woods High School is managed by CS Partners, an educational service provider based in Howell. CS Partners uses professional educators and administrators, plus research-tested methods and structures to oversee school management. Their services include, but are not limited to, day-to-day operations, curriculum development, staff training, marketing, grant writing, staff training, and curriculum development.