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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Innovative Orientation for Area High School Freshman Sets Stage for Next Four Years

HOWELL, MICHIGAN — August 29, 2008 — The Kensington Woods High School class of 2012 kicked off their high school career with a three-day camping and canoe trip, August 21 – 23. The trip is just one part of Kensington’s freshman year program and the beginning of an innovative four-year curriculum.

An alternative to the traditional high school orientation, the three-day camping and canoe trip gave students an opportunity to meet and greet outside of the opening day of the school year. Students and teachers canoed through the Mason Tract wilderness area on the South Branch of the Au Sable River.

The move to high school can be a little unsettling to students — new school, new schoolmates, and new expectations. “To smooth the transition into high school, we offer a less traditional freshman orientation, where incoming freshmen can meet their new classmates, talk to older student leaders, and learn a bit about how things work at Kensington Woods,” explains David Coupland, orientation coordinator, head guide, and KWHS math and science teacher.

“We purposefully integrate students into the foundation of the school,” says Kensington Woods Principal Jim Perry. “This is really educational innovation — it’s not just a camping trip,” he adds. “This trip helps set the stage for the next four years.”

Kensington has taken a proactive approach to student success by instituting two programs that will frame the high school experience. “*Freshman Seminar* prepares students to get the most of their four years at Kensington,” says Jim Perry, KWHS principal, “and the

Senior Exhibition is a presentation of what they've learned and mastered during that time.”

Freshman Seminar is a comprehensive course of study that focuses on the skills necessary for students to navigate the complicated, information-driven world of today. Freshman Seminar students begin work immediately on reading skills by using complex texts that comply with ACT standards. Students will regularly apply their acquired skills to contemporary issues through research, seminars, and interviews. Such applications help freshman master the higher-level thinking and collaborative skills that are crucial to academic success. Indeed, research shows that ninth grade is the most critical year in predicting student success. “We want our freshman to learn to handle the rigors of high school, and also to be competitive with the best students in the state and even the nation,” says Laura Moellering, advisory program coordinator and Kensington faculty member.

The skills learned during Freshman Seminar will be honed throughout the next four years culminating in the Senior Exhibition, in which seniors will demonstrate the knowledge and applications that they have practiced since freshman year. Seniors will choose and research a social issue such as energy use and supply, home foreclosure, or child-care for low-income workers. Their topics will be researched globally but enacted upon locally.

To realize the interconnectedness of their world, students will research all aspects of their issue and develop a sustainable service-learning project that addresses the problem from their perspective. Seniors will develop their projects through panel discussion during which they will support their research, justify their conclusions, and create a final presentation for students, parents, faculty, and community members. “Universities and employers value the ability to work collaboratively and to communicate effectively,” says Moellering. “Senior Exhibition can lead directly to successful college study and employment.”

For further information about Kensington Woods High School, visit kensingtonwoodshs.com, 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.

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

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