

Jadyn McLeod  
Kensington Woods Schools  
9<sup>th</sup> Grade– Ms. Shannon Morton

### Prepared to Succeed

My definition of the word “hope” begins with Kensington Woods.

Kensington Woods is a forest where everything grows. Our teachers come together to give every child at the school a chance to excel. There is no student left behind; whether a student is struggling academically, emotionally, or otherwise, the school will work tirelessly to ensure that the student receives an equal opportunity to succeed. I am one of those students.

I came to Kensington Woods with depression and a limited set of options. I lacked work ethic, determination, and aspirations. I was shy, reclusive, and crippled by anxiety. After attending two different schools, I had lost hope of finding an environment that would let me feel normal. I had lost hope for a successful future. Kensington Woods gave me a future. Presently, having attended the school for almost two years, I can say that I finally see a light at the end of the tunnel. Over my time at the school, I learned responsibility, I learned motivation, and I learned how to speak. I learned to function on a daily basis. The small setting of the school let me slowly acquire social skills and rid myself of agoraphobia, while the fervent work of my teachers gave me the chance to pull my grades together. The school’s allowance of retesting swept the anxiety of tests off of my shoulders. Its celebration of positive attitudes and kind words (specifically by announcing weekly personal bests) showed me the power of empathizing with others. Its firm but forgiving rules showed me what having accountability for my actions truly means. At Kensington Woods, no student is a lost cause. At Kensington Woods, our policy is optimism.

My school has been able to teach me what I never thought I would learn: integration, cooperation, and teamwork. To succeed in life, a person must be able to work well with others. I couldn’t, but Kensington Woods guided me down the path. Before my enrollment, the word “social” wasn’t involved in the foggiest definition of my future. I detested speaking and I thought of group work as a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle. I was antisocial and tongue-tied. Through Kensington Woods, I learned to collaborate, I learned to adapt, and I learned expression. I received endless opportunities to improve my attitude toward connection with others; I was given frequent group work, chances to speak in front of the school, the opportunity to participate in clubs, school-wide unity activities, the chance to participate in Day of Service (a day where the entire school volunteers at once), and countless other fortuitous ways in which I developed the ability to band together with others. I became a part of the school’s society, no longer withdrawn and unapproachable. I discovered the positives of working with a group. I learned to value the opinion of my peers. I now no longer dread getting my first job. Without a fear of routine conversation, the light shines on an array of new opportunities. My school taught me to think of amiability as an ordinary part of life.

Every day, my teachers show me what it means to take pride in one’s work. My teachers spend their free time grading papers, staying after school to provide additional help, planning lessons and activities, making tests, and developing the best way to help us learn and grow. I have bad days, and on those days, I cannot count the number of times that my teachers have asked me if I was feeling all right, if I was doing okay, or what was wrong. My teachers make me feel like they truly care not just about

helping me thrive at the school, but about helping me make it through life. Their confidence in their work and passion for what they do makes me want to try my hardest. The quality of my assignments skyrocketed with their approval and constructive criticism. My teachers make me want to triumph. I know hard work and perseverance will be my saving grace in college; higher education will not be easy, but quality work and determination to learn is the recipe for success.

Kensington Woods is not just one Cheerio in the bulk box of amazing schools; it's the picture on the box. My school pushed me to recover, and I developed high hopes for the future I now think fondly about. I won't live a life of desolation, apprehension, second-guesses, and "what-ifs." I will succeed.

*Board Policies Client – Kensington Woods Schools  
Epicenter Client – Central Michigan University*