

### Students Angered Over Punishment For Underaged Drinking

HUGOTON, Kansas – A graduation controversy in Hugoton involves underaged drinking, a student petition and claims that three students shouldn't get to walk in the ceremony this Saturday.

Now, many seniors at Hugoton High School have come together, urging district leaders to follow its own policy in dealing with students who use alcohol. The move comes after three seniors were suspended for being under the influence of alcohol at school. One of those students was the superintendent's daughter.

"Everyone knows that if you drink and come to school, you're going to get caught," said senior Marine Neira. "I was shocked they actually were willing to do that."

But multiple students and parents said that last Friday three seniors returned to school under the influence of alcohol. The school reacted and suspended the student, but the punishment left many in the senior class upset.

"That they're not getting punished," said senior Debi Kelling. "Their punishment was three days of OSS (out of school suspension), so technically their summer vacation just started early. "They get to graduate still. They get to walk across the stage and everything."

The class of 2010 was so upset it signed a petition. Sixty out of 78 graduating seniors and 154 underclassmen urged the district to follow its own policy.

Hugoton High is very clear on students who use alcohol. The district's policy says students will receive a short-term suspension for five school days and will be suspended from all student activities for a period of not less than one month.

The controversy and the student petition was enough for the Hugoton School Board to hold a special meeting on Tuesday where board members voted to reaffirm the district's policy.

The district did not comment on whether it took the Board's recommendation, which would call for a five-day suspension or whether the students will be able to walk in this Saturday's graduation ceremony.

"You have people who are in higher positions and their children are getting in trouble," said senior Kelsi Pomeroy. "I think it's wrong. I think they should have the same punishment as if I were to get into trouble. I know I wouldn't be graduating with the rest of my class if I were to do something like that."