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Drink alcohol Friday night? Get caught on Monday

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PEQUANNOCK, N.J. — Teens who drink alcohol could be caught three days later under a high school's new testing policy for students.

The test, which will be given randomly to students at Pequannock Township High School, can detect whether alcohol was consumed up to 80 hours earlier.

Pequannock Superintendent Larrie Reynolds said the policy approved last week should be a deterrent to students who feel peer pressure to drink.

Under the program, students who test positive will not be kicked off teams or barred from extracurricular activities, Reynolds said. Instead they will receive counseling — and their parents will be notified.

"Most kids who think they can get away with it might be tempted to stop and think about it," he said.

The test costs will be paid with federal grants, Reynolds said. Urine screenings look for ethyl glucuronide, produced by the body after it metabolizes alcohol.

School officials acknowledge the test is sensitive, and false positive readings can be the result of using products containing ethanol, including mouthwash and balsamic vinegar.

But Reynolds said in order for students to test positive, they would generally have had to consume the equivalent of one or two drinks.

Other districts already use the test. Middletown began using it last spring for students suspected of using drugs and alcohol. This month, the district expanded it to include a random pool of about 1,800 students.

Critics have said the testing does not work and invades students' privacy.

"Medical care and treatment are issues between parents and children," said Deborah Jacobs, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey.

local angle

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