

## Teachers to receive thousands of vaccines this week

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PARAMUS — More than 900 teachers and school staff rolled up their sleeves on Monday for their first doses of the coronavirus vaccine.

The Valley Hospital is offering a week of vaccine distribution specifically for school staff. And 2,400 more will be done by Wednesday, with an additional 2,400 doses expected by the end of the week, said Bettyann Kempin, assistant vice president of medical and surgical services at The Valley Hospital, who is facilitating its Supporting Our Schools initiative.

“It’s been going beautiful,” Kempin said. “They are just so appreciative. It’s unbelievable to hear them, and they are so happy that they are on the list and can be vaccinated.”

A lack of vaccines for teachers has been an obstacle to having schools re-open for in-person learning. The state announced on March 6 that school and day care staffers are immediately eligible, and that includes 116,000 full-time classroom teachers.

Dr. Robert Brenner, president of clinical integration and physician enterprise at Valley Health System, said

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the Supporting Our Schools initiative will continue as the need arises and if the hospital has vaccines available.

“We all want our children to get back to school,” Brenner said.

“Being a community and regional

health system, we’re involved with our educators in the community. We’re physically right next to the Ridgewood High School, so we’re very indebted to the school systems and we feel that we need to support them.”

He added, “We still have to continue to vaccinate those who are in great need, but we also want to get in our teachers and support staff as well.”

Brenner said the hospital opened a site in the past few weeks at 599 Valley Health Plaza, across the street from the new Valley Hospital, and it can administer 1,600 vaccines a day, assuming that there is enough supply.

The hospital has given close to 50,000 vaccines to its staff, first responders and members of the community since the vaccine rollout began, with almost 25,000 of those at the Paramus location.

“The supply chain is still not perfected to where we can get a steady stream and know exactly when we are getting what,” Brenner said. “Most of the time we only schedule for the vaccines that we have in the freezer.”

Tom Trubac, a fourth-grade teacher in Ridgewood, said receiving the vaccine Monday felt like the beginning of returning to normalcy for his students, who he believes have been affected the most this past year. Hawes Elementary School has a hybrid schedule, so he sees his students every other day.

“The kids really have lost out on time, parties, get-togethers and just having fun,” Trubac said. “In the classroom especially — one thing I pride myself on is having fun in the classroom. When you have fun, you can learn a lot more.”

Daniel Miller, a business teacher at Fair Lawn High School, was pleasantly surprised by how quick the whole experience was from start to finish. He had expected crowds and long lines, but was out in under an hour.

Even signing up was quick; after receiving a notice from his union on Friday, he already had an appointment for Monday.



“I feel better for myself and my family now that I have it,” Miller said.

To make an appointment, educators, school personnel and licensed child care providers can complete an eligibility form at [valleyhealth.com/schools](http://valleyhealth.com/schools).

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