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## **Gov. Wolf: Successful Teacher and School Staff Vaccination Initiative is Completed Ahead of Schedule**

**Kingston, PA** – After vaccinating more than 112,500 teachers and school staff in only about three weeks, Governor Tom Wolf visited Luzerne County today to announce the special vaccination initiative is a success and was completed ahead of schedule. The accomplishment is an important step to help more students and teachers safely return to classrooms across the state.

“This is a great success, and I am so proud of everyone who made it happen,” said Gov. Wolf. “We know that teachers and students want to be back in the classroom where students can learn, laugh and grow with their friends. Completing our special vaccination initiative is a big milestone for Pennsylvania, one that will better protect schools, families and communities.

“Vaccines are the light at the end of the tunnel when it comes to this pandemic, and with the completion of this special initiative, we are one step closer to the end of that tunnel. That is something for everyone in the commonwealth to celebrate.”

The governor held a press conference at Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18 and was joined by its executive director, Dr. Tony Grieco, Education Secretary Noe Ortega, PSEA President Rich Askey, Northwest Area Junior-Senior High School teacher Vito Malacari and other legislators and stakeholders.

“As Executive Director of one of the 28 intermediate units across Pennsylvania that hosted vaccination clinics for school personnel, I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to Governor Wolf and the COVID-19 Vaccine Joint Task Force for providing a plan for Pennsylvania’s school personnel to receive a vaccine,” said Grieco.

“Today is a turning point in the lives of our schools and our students here in Pennsylvania, and PSEA’s members are so excited about what lies ahead,” Askey said. “Some schools are

reopening their doors after many months of remote instruction, while many more are expanding their schedules to bring students back into the classroom more days of the week.

“This is happening thanks to everyone who took decisive action one month ago to get vaccines out to those school employees who want them. You have helped ensure a safer environment for in-person instruction in our schools — protecting the health of educators, support professionals, students, and their families.”

Shortly after the federal government approved the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine for use, Gov. Wolf and the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force announced on March 3 a special initiative to provide a voluntary opportunity for Pre-K to 12 educators and school staff to be vaccinated. The Wolf Administration partnered with the state’s 28 intermediate units to rapidly establish vaccine clinics and conduct outreach to teachers and staff through school districts to schedule appointments.

“In less than one month, communities across Pennsylvania collaborated around the clock to vaccinate thousands of teachers and school staff; a truly remarkable and heroic effort,” said Acting Secretary of Education Noe Ortega. “I am very grateful to Governor Wolf and the COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force for creating this special initiative, and proud of our Intermediate Units, school leaders, state agency partners, the National Guard, and AMI Expeditionary Healthcare for their extraordinary work to coordinate this opportunity. We are now closer than ever to a safe, full return to in-person teaching and learning.”

The Pennsylvania National Guard and AMI Expeditionary Healthcare swiftly coordinated hundreds of health care professionals at 28 vaccine clinics across the state to put the shots into arms. Many of the vaccine clinics were held on evenings and weekends so students could continue learning during the school day without interruption.

This week, the Wolf Administration announced several other steps to help create local conditions for schools to return students to classrooms. On Monday, Gov. Wolf announced [K to 12 schools will receive nearly \\$5 billion in federal funds](#) to support classroom learning and equitably expand opportunity for students who need it most. Part of the funding will address learning loss and the social, emotional and academic needs of underrepresented students.

On Wednesday, the departments of Health and Education updated recommendations on [social distancing in schools to provide for three feet in many instances](#), which aligns with new [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommendations, and the [handling of COVID-19 cases in schools](#) to reduce the number of days for school closures. The recommendations take effect April 5.

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