



BETHEL PARK

SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 19, 2021

Dear Staff,

Re: Please continue to follow all COVID-19 mitigation measures, even if you have already been vaccinated

In recent weeks, the majority of the Bethel Park School District staff has been inoculated with either the Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines. And while those vaccines are all showing very high potency – particularly when it comes to serious illness, hospitalizations, and deaths – it is important to note that none of them have a 100% efficacy rate. Also, according to the CDC, less than half of American adults and very few school-aged children have been vaccinated. That means that all staff are to continue to follow the same health and safety protocols we have successfully adopted for most of the school year.

In the past week alone, we have seen several positive COVID-19 cases among members of the BPSD community **who had already been vaccinated**. Also, unfortunately, the cases have not been limited to just one vaccine. Rather all three major American vaccines have been a part of our conversations.

Please note this does *not* mean that the vaccines have been ineffective or overstated. In fact, just the opposite is true. The vaccines have been remarkably impactful. Clinical trials showed the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines lowered risks of developing symptomatic COVID-19 by about 95%. This means vaccinated people were about 20 times less likely to get the disease than those who didn't receive a shot.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine had a 72% efficacy rate among Americans. Experts say the protection appears to be lower because it was the only shot that was [tested against the more contagious coronavirus variants](#).

In other words, the vaccines aren't capable of protecting everyone from infection, but they are often able to better protect them by spurring the development of antibodies [without causing sickness](#), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

Comparatively, according to the CDC, the much more established [flu vaccine](#) is between 40% and 60% effective, depending on the version of the virus that's circulating in a given year. Yet, the flu vaccine prevented an estimated 7.5 million flu illnesses, 105,000 hospitalizations and 6,300 deaths during the 2019-2020 season.

That said, it is imperative that we continue to maintain our focus and not be lulled into a false sense of security when it comes to the coronavirus or our spread prevention and mitigation measures. Please continue to maintain social distancing, regularly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds in warm soapy water and continue to wear a mask that covers up your nose and mouth areas. Also, if you are under the weather on a given day, and your symptoms are even semi-consistent with COVID-19, please err on the side of caution and stay home from school and see a medical professional – even if you have already been vaccinated.

We are definitely much better off now than we have been in more than a year. However, we are not yet out of the COVID-19 woods and it would be foolish and dangerous to our students and fellow staff members to assume otherwise.

Sincerely,

James Walsh, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Bethel Park School District