



How to Start a Flex Period in Your School

An interactive, step-by-step implementation workbook

Experience the benefits of flex periods

Flex periods are becoming increasingly popular as an evidence-based best practice. Across the country, schools are implementing flex periods to make improvements in student achievement, voice and choice, engagement, equity, attendance, and more.

While the initial implementation of flex periods does require time and effort, it shouldn't become an obstacle. In this guide, you'll be walked step by step through the process of planning and implementing your first flex period so you can experience their benefits in your school, too.

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How to Use this Interactive Guide:

The form fields throughout this guide are fillable. Just type your answers in the spaces provided and be sure to save frequently so you don't lose your work.







Step 1: Identify Purposes & Goals

Flex periods are most effective when they support a specific purpose in your school. Developing a purpose statement will help you clarify your “why” for starting a flex period and help you work through the steps that follow.

Task A: Answer Reflection Questions

Before you draft your purpose statement, we suggest reviewing these reflection questions and taking the time to clarify your motivations and intentions. We promise it will be time well spent!

Question	Your Answer
<p data-bbox="137 696 571 722">Why do we want to start a flex period?</p> 	
<p data-bbox="160 915 548 941">What do we hope it accomplishes?</p>	
<p data-bbox="146 1103 562 1190">What impact do we hope to see after starting a flex period this year? What about next year, or 5 years out?</p>	

Question	Your Answer
<p>Are there any remaining questions we still need to explore before starting our flex period? If so, what?</p> 	
<p>What other strategies or structures, if any, are we currently using that could be improved by having a flex period?</p>	
<p>What existing strategies or structures, if any, could be replaced by a flex period?</p>	
<p>What possible roadblocks do we expect to encounter when implementing a flex period? From who? Why?</p>	
<p>Where might we find time for a flex period? What compromises, if any, will allocating time for a flex period require?</p>	

Task B: Craft Your Purpose Statement

Now it's time to write your purpose statement. The objective is to clearly articulate the reason(s) why you're starting a flex period. This will serve as your "north star" as you work through the additional steps and implementation process.

Here's a template you can use:

Starting a flex period at [REDACTED] **will enable us**
to [REDACTED]
while also [REDACTED]

Or use this space to craft your own purpose statement:

Remember that your purpose statement can take many forms. Maybe you want to keep it simple and straightforward. Or maybe you want to make it more visually engaging. Use whatever format inspires you and works best for your needs.

Task C: Define Your Goals

Defining specific goals will help you stay focused on the specific outcomes you wish to achieve, while also helping you evaluate the effectiveness of your flex period. Consider this statement when defining your goals: **We will know that flex periods are working if...**

Also, start with **no more than three goals**. We know it may be tempting to go all out here, but keep your goals simple and achievable for now. Focus on the quick wins that will make starting a flex period worth the effort.

Flex Period Goal #1	
Flex Period Goal #2	
Flex Period Goal #3	



Pro Tip

How to Set SMART Goals

Using the [SMART method](#) will make sure your goals are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound**. By having concrete goals in place, it will be easier to objectively assess if flex periods are working for your school.



Examples of SMART goals:

- Improve state test scores by an average of 20 points for each subject and grade by the next testing period
- Increase the number of students scoring proficient or better on the state test by 15% after one year
- Increase student participation in enrichment activities by 10% from this semester to the end of next semester
- Gain 80% teacher agreement that students are more engaged in class after two semesters
- Achieve 80% student agreement that flex periods are beneficial to their learning after two semesters
- Improve student attendance by 5% by the end of the school year

Step 2: Create Time & Space

Finding the time for your flex period is often one of the bigger challenges. Some schools find that using a homeroom or advisory period is the easiest place to start. Others shorten each class by a few minutes to gain the time. There is no right or wrong answer here, so consider what will be the easiest option for you.

Task A: Answer Scheduling Questions

Before you actually build a schedule, take some time to answer the questions below. They will help you think through the most important considerations and prepare you for the next step.

Question	Your Answer
Ideally, how often do you want to offer a flex period? Daily / multiple times per week / weekly	
How long do you want your flex period to be? See our Pro Tip on page 9 for guidance	
What day and / or time of day could work given your current schedule?	
How many options would you like to offer during each flex period? Will students have multiple options to choose from for enrichments etc	
Where will flex periods be held? Will students go to one place, or will there be multiple locations	



Pro Tip

How Much Time to Allocate for Your Flex Period

While you need to make sure you meet your state’s requirements around instructional minutes, remember that there is no minimum or maximum time requirement for a flex period. Most schools find they need at least 20 minutes to make it worthwhile. Few schools allocate longer than 45 minutes unless they run the schedule less often, like once or twice a week.

Task B: Build Your Schedule

Before you start building your schedule, have your current schedule handy; you may want to enter it on page 9 so it’s visible as you work through your modified flex period schedule. When rescheduling, prioritize doing what will be easiest and most sensible for you and your school.



Pro Tip

Where to Find the Time for Your Flex Period

Here are 5 of the most common ways to identify flex period time, either singularly or as a combo (1 = easiest to implement / 5 = most difficult):

1. Adapt your Homeroom or Advisory schedule*
2. Repurpose minutes from lunchtime
3. Borrow 1-2 minutes from each passing period between classes
4. Shorten each class period by 2-5 minutes
5. Extend your bell schedule by adding time at the start or end of the day

Before

Period	Start	End	Min.
1	8:30	9:30	60
2	9:34	10:29	55
Break	10:29	10:39	10
3	10:43	11:38	55
4	11:42	12:37	55
Lunch	12:37	1:17	40
5	1:21	2:16	55
6	2:20	3:15	55



After

Period	Start	End	Min.
1	8:30	9:24	54
2	9:28	10:18	50
Break	10:18	10:28	10
Flex	10:32	10:59	27
3	11:03	11:53	50
4	11:57	12:47	50
Lunch	12:47	1:27	40
5	1:31	2:21	50
6	2:25	3:15	50

**If using your Homeroom/Advisory schedule every day doesn’t give you the required number of instructional minutes, you could also start by using it a few days each week instead of every day.*



Step 3: Build Buy-in

Next and arguably the most important step is to get buy-in from your community. This includes your teachers and staff, students, their families, and any other groups that might have a particular interest and voice in the direction of your school.

When determining how to build buy-in, you'll want to identify your stakeholders' motivations so you can highlight how flex periods support them. Perhaps more importantly, you'll want to identify potential objections each group of stakeholders may have.

Task A: Identify Stakeholder Motivators & Barriers

Here are some questions to explore as you complete the worksheet below:

- What opportunities is each stakeholder motivated by (for example: reaching struggling learners; getting to work with small groups)?
- What will each stakeholder see as most problematic (for example: scheduling and logistics; lost instructional time; more work)?

Stakeholder	Motivators	Barriers	Stakeholder	Motivators	Barriers
Students			Teachers		
Families					
Support Staff					
Admin Leadership					

NOTE: We've ordered the stakeholders intentionally. Since it's typically easier to get buy-in from students and families, we suggest starting there. It can also be helpful to work through other stakeholders before tackling teachers, who can be more challenging. But they are also the most critical, so be sure to spend time thoroughly understanding their motivations and objections.

Task B: Develop Communications Plan

After you've identified the motivators and barriers, develop talking points to help you present your flex period plan to each of your various stakeholders. The goal is to be prepared with specific talking points that:

1. Highlight the ways flex periods address each stakeholder's motivations to create easy "wins"
2. Identify the objections you're likely to get so you're prepared with responses to address them
3. Share the benefits and outcomes you're hoping to achieve (i.e., your purpose statement and goals)

Next, you'll develop your messaging strategy for delivering your talking points and moving each stakeholder group into alignment. You'll want to identify when and how you'll communicate your flex period proposal.

- **When:** What date will you share your plan with each stakeholder group? Be sure to consider what approvals are needed.
- **How:** What vehicles will you use to communicate your plan (for example: emails, meetings, presentations, documents)?

The messaging plan should include how you'll communicate (like emails, meetings, or even online documents), but doesn't have to be one-directional only. Consider leveraging ways to get feedback from group members where appropriate, but be sure it's in places that are truly open to input so their voices are heard – otherwise you may find you don't have the support you need to make your flex period successful.

Task: When you're ready, begin listing the groups that you'll need to build buy-in with, starting with the most important and urgent at the top of the list. Then start creating your list of motivations and barriers for each, followed by the buy-in messages and strategies you'll use to invest them. We've included a graphic organizer to help organize this process for you on the next page (page 12).



Pro Tip

If In Doubt, Ask Directly

When considering what you'll need to address to gain stakeholder alignment, don't overlook the opportunity to ask them directly. By surveying your stakeholders, you can learn exactly what will be required to gain their support. Additionally, by taking the gesture to ask them directly, you may find yourself building early buy-in, making it easier to get everyone on board.

Stakeholder	Talking Points	Comms Plan: How	Comms Plan: When
Teachers			
Admin Leaders			
Support Staff			
Families			
Students			



NOTE: We recommend starting with your internal teams. It might be helpful to break into sub-groups, like your leadership team, teachers, and paras, for example, before moving on to students, families, and other stakeholders. If you need approval from the district level, you may also want to start there. While it might be helpful to complete this process for all the groups on your list before moving on to step 4, we'd likely recommend focusing mostly on the most important group (or two) to get started.

Also, because teachers are your most critical stakeholders, we suggest starting with them to build their buy-in and enlist their support when communicating with other stakeholder groups.

Step 4: Work Out Logistics

In this step, you'll work through the logistics and develop the systems needed to implement your flex period. We recommend thinking about how to involve your leadership team at this stage to provide top-down support.

Consider that schools are typically more successful at implementation when they have a core team of people to prepare the logistics. You'll want to identify clear owners for each piece of the process and systemize implementation as much as possible. If those people also have input into the systems required, they'll be better able to execute their respective roles.

Task A: Plan Your First Flex Period

The questions on page 15 are designed to kickstart your thinking and help you put together your own logistical plan. This isn't meant to be an exhaustive list, so you will likely want to add additional details to round out your plan.

We encourage you to build your plan in a shareable document or spreadsheet to facilitate collaboration. Be sure the plan is accessible to everyone involved and that they're given ample opportunities to make suggestions, ask questions, and gain clarification before roll out.




Pro Tip

How to Make Flex Period Implementation Easier

When it comes to the logistics of implementing and managing a flex period, you don't need to figure it all out yourself. There are software tools, like Securly Flex, that are designed specifically to make it easier to add flex periods to your school schedule. [Learn more here.](#)





Question	Your Answer
What date will we launch our first flex period?	
Who will be responsible for creating the flex period schedule?	
Will we have a practice run before implementation? When/how will this occur?	
How will flex period offerings be determined? Will teachers and/or students have a say?	
Who will be responsible for ensuring that students who need remediation are scheduled?	
How will we resolve conflicts when multiple teachers want the same student?	
What is the best size for each flex period session?	
 How will we ensure teachers honor flex periods?	
How will we keep track of where students are?	
What tools will we need to help accomplish each of the above?	

Step 5: Develop & Communicate Norms


Congratulations! You've reached the last step, which is developing and communicating norms.

Task A: Develop Preliminary Norms

The goal of establishing norms is to make it clear how the time should be used and what's expected of everyone involved. While there is no prescriptive set of norms that applies to every school, the questions below and on the subsequent page provide a starting point. Consider them as guiding questions to help you identify the norms that are most relevant and important for your school. We also recommend creating your own shareable and living document to house your norms ultimately – more on this below.

Question	Your Answer
When planning flex periods, what will selection of options look like? If teachers and students can make requests, when must those be submitted by?	
Which activities are acceptable for a flex period? Which are not?	
Does a maximum class size need to be specified for each flex period? Are there any exceptions, such as location or purpose? Do exceptions need to be reviewed or approved and, if so, what is the process for doing so?	



Question	Your Answer
<p>What about a minimum class size? Are there any exceptions? Do exceptions need to be reviewed or approved and, if so, what is the process for doing so?</p>	
<p>What “public” spaces (e.g. cafeteria, library) are available for use? How are they reserved?</p>	
<p>How will teachers be held accountable for leading flex periods?</p>	
<p>What will happen if a flex period teacher calls in sick?</p>	
<p>How will students be held accountable for attending flex periods?</p>	
<p>Are teachers expected to take attendance? If so, how/where should teachers take and record attendance?</p>	

Task B: Solicit Feedback

Once you've drafted your norms, solicit feedback from your team before rolling them out. You may want to have your teachers and staff review first to provide feedback and suggest any additions. Then, you'll want to have your leadership team review the norms before finalizing. We caution against getting bogged down in trying to make the norms exhaustively thorough as this may stall your progress. You're so close to the finish line, and you can always add to them and refine them over time.

Task C: Finalize & Communicate

Once you've received feedback, you'll want to "finalize" (for now, at least) and communicate your norms. We recommend using a shareable and living document in the cloud (such as a Google Doc) to house your norms. This will make it easier to make revisions over time—which will almost certainly be needed—without having to redistribute hard copies or keep track of document versions. Be sure to make the document viewable to all stakeholders, but only editable by certain people.

Finally, be sure to communicate your norms to everyone involved. You can easily add the link to emails or other communications about your flex periods.



Pro Tip

Don't Communicate Your Norms Just Once

You'll want to communicate your norms when you first implement flex periods. But communication isn't a one-and-done exercise. To make sure everyone is informed of and up-to-date on your flex period norms and expectations, you'll want to share them out each time you initiate a new flex period, such as at the beginning of each semester or term. You may also want to add a link to your flex period norms document on your website, in your LMS, or in other tools that your stakeholders use regularly for information.

Finally, be sure that any tools you use to schedule your flex period, whether spreadsheets or a tool like [Securly Flex](#), reflect and reinforce these norms, both in the language chosen and the rules enforced.



Want Help Implementing a Flex Period in Your School?

Hopefully, you've worked through all of the steps and are on your way to realizing the benefits of flex periods.

But if you're not quite there yet, don't worry. Even the most capable educators can bump into challenges when implementing their first flex period. We're here to help.



Take the Complexity Out of Flex Periods

Securly Flex is a flex period scheduling and management tool. It simplifies the “how” parts of flex periods, so you can focus on providing “what” will be most beneficial.

With Securly Flex, every aspect of flex period implementation is made so much easier. You can:

- Create schedules
- Track availability
- Assign students
- Take attendance
- ...and so much more!

Curious how Securly Flex can simplify implementation of your flex period?



[Learn more](#)

