

Amherst–Pelham Regional School District Start & End Times Survey Questions & Answers

Overview

Since the survey was released, we have received several questions from families and community members about the proposed start and end times. We appreciate this engagement and recognize the importance of clarity around schedules that directly impact students, families, and staff. In response, we would like to share this information with the broader community to ensure a common understanding, address questions that have emerged, and provide transparency as we continue this work thoughtfully and deliberately.

Questions & Answers (As of 2.9.2026)

Q: Why is ARHS proposing this change?

A: When the start time shifted to 9:00 a.m. rather than the previously established 7:45 a.m. start, the district adjusted the schedule by integrating certain activities that had traditionally taken place after school into the regular instructional day. More recently, guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires that these activities return to after-school hours. As a result, additional time at the end of the school day is needed to ensure students have sufficient access to both core academic instruction and co-curricular opportunities. Without adequate after-school time, students' ability to engage fully in academic preparation, enrichment, and college and career readiness activities is limited. While the 9:00 a.m. start time functioned effectively when ARHS operated with a FlexBlock that allowed students to access academic and social-emotional supports as needed, the removal of FlexBlock and the reduction of after-school time have changed those conditions. Under the current schedule, the structure no longer fully supports the range of students' academic, social-emotional, and community engagement needs.

Q: What did students lose with the shift from FlexBlock to Extended Block?

A: Students lost the ability to choose where to go for targeted extra help or practice. During Extended Block, students are assigned to a specific teacher, even if that class is not where they need the most support. For example, under FlexBlock, a student who needed help in math could go to their math teacher during the week for as many days as needed until they understood the concept. Under Extended Block, a student who needs math support may be assigned to a teacher who is rostered to teach English during that block, limiting access to subject-specific help. In addition, for time to count as instructional, students must attend a rostered class with a structured, planned lesson during the school day. This reduces flexibility and makes it harder for students to receive the support they actually need. Students have also lost time for co-curricular activities such as robotics, InvenTeam, and MSAN, as well as opportunities for independent research or study in the library.

Q: How does an earlier start time support extra help for students?

A: Under the current 9:00 a.m. start time, opportunities for students to stay after school for extra help are limited by the alignment of the teacher workday and the start of athletic activities. Under the proposed schedule, the teacher workday is adjusted to allow more staff availability later in the afternoon, creating a dedicated window from 3:10 to 3:45 p.m. for students to remain afterschool for academic support. This time falls within teacher contract hours, does not conflict with athletic start times, and allows more teachers to support more students who need it.

Q: How has the 9:00 a.m. start time impacted extracurricular and after-school activities?

A: After-school activities have been limited due to the overlap between the end of the teacher workday and the start of athletics. Because FlexBlock is no longer available for these activities, fewer opportunities for mentoring, student-driven learning, clubs, and library research are available.

Q: Will students have access to transportation if they choose to stay after school for help?

A: Late buses will be provided every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday for students who stay after school to receive additional support.

Q: Where can I find information on the presentation done for the School Committee?

A: ARHS made a presentation to the Regional School Committee on December 9, 2025. Here is the link to documents on Boarddocs (<https://go.boarddocs.com/ma/arps/Board.nsf/Public>) and youtube video https://www.youtube.com/live/6wq_VBlhrIk?si=04OIrDVLCOI1-cYy.