

Five Ways to Keep the Rise in Fall

- 1. Keep in touch** Carve out 5-10 minutes of class each day or week for a class meeting. Make it an open forum in which students (and you!) are invited to share questions, concerns, or comments about class or school events. You also may use this as an opportunity to reflect on pre-established class norms and expectations with students and determine areas where the class is excelling and areas which might need more attention. Set up a bulletin or white board where students can record issues they wish to discuss during class meetings at any time.
- 2. Stay current** Use current events as a jumping-off point for lessons or discussion; challenge students to research and record one connection between a current event or news item and a topic they're studying in class each week. Ask students to identify and summarize specific articles or newscasts they encounter during their research, and set up small groups for sharing, or a rotation for whole-class sharing.
- 3. Stay active** Make the classroom a dynamic, fun, and active environment; rather than structuring lessons in such a way so that students sit in one place or work silently for extended periods of time, have students move between multiple learning stations and collaborate with one another. Consider integrating games, simulations, role play activities, skits, readers' theater, scavenger hunts, building activities, or other tasks that encourage movement, expression, real world problem solving, and high engagement.
- 4. Think outside the (classroom) box** Launch a service learning or community outreach project with your students, such as a canned food drive, a holiday toy collection, care packages for military personnel serving overseas, a tutoring program for younger pupils within your school, or visits to a local retirement home. Encourage students to take an active role in planning and executing the project, and connect aspects of the project to curricular elements as possible (e.g. have students calculate how many cans are needed per week to meet a given need in x number of weeks and create a graph tracking progress; have students write application essays explaining why they would be an effective tutor to another student or buddy to a local senior citizen).
- 5. Self-direct** Encourage students to take control of their own learning by having them pursue a project of their choice related to a relevant curriculum concept. For example, if studying the history and geography of Europe in social studies class, one student might choose to create a three-dimensional topographical map using paper, modeling clay, and other manipulatives, while another might choose to develop a short play depicting historical events. Allow students' natural interest and curiosity drive their learning, and designate certain days or times each week for students to work on their projects and/or collaborate with classmates.

