

## All About Practice *A Principal's Letter to the Student Community*

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Lately I have been thinking about practice. What constitutes a practice? Some people talk about their yoga practice or their meditation practice. Others talk about their career as a practice. For example, you often hear doctors talk about their medical practices, and lawyers talk about their legal practices. Athletes talk about practice as the activity that prepares them for the game. When an athlete learns and repeats a skill regularly, he or she becomes proficient, and eventually an expert in that sport. For actors, rehearsals are their practice, and the performance is the main event. Most musicians and athletes agree that the one way (and perhaps the only way) that you get better is through consistent practice. And students very often learn through practice in different subjects.



That old saying “practice makes perfect” would suggest that regular and persistent repetition of an activity or skill allows one to become, well, “perfect” at it. But what I am suggesting is that the perfection lies within the continual practice of the skill or activity. Some people report that when they rehearse, or work out, or run drills, they enter into what is now commonly known as “the zone” or a “state of flow.”

Have you ever been so excited about something that you completely lose track of time and are totally engaged in it? During this time one is super productive, creative and feels powerful. I have had times when I am writing and I feel I am able to find the right words, almost as if they are flowing from me. As a dancer, I sometimes feel that I am “being danced,” more than I am dancing. This is the kind of engagement that we are hoping for students to achieve in their learning at The Marin School.

The truth is, whether we know it or not, we all have practices - the things we do on a daily basis. These can be positive and full of great meaning, such as a daily practice of gratitude, kindness, or generosity. But sometimes our practices are habits that we may not be aware that we repeat. I think you know the kinds of habits I'm talking about, the negative ones that creep in without us noticing at first. The ones that can affect us (and others around us) adversely, such as negative self-talk, complaining, gossiping, swearing, comparing ourselves to others and procrastination.

What we practice makes us who we are; because, in fact, life is all about practice. During our second semester, I encourage everyone to be mindful about choosing which of our habits we'd like to perfect, and to do our best to end the practices that don't serve our goals or improve our lives.