

---

# Practice Makes Progress

## Classroom Guide

*Every expert was once a beginner who refused to stop*

**CASEL Competency:** Self-Management  
**Grade Level:** Pre-K–4  
**Duration:** 40–50 minutes  
**Category:** Sports & Teamwork

## Learning Objectives

---

- Understand that skill-building requires daily practice, not instant talent
  - Recognize the "plateau" — the flat part where improvement is invisible but happening
  - Learn that the tiny improvements ARE the progress, even when they feel small
  - Practice setting small, achievable daily goals
-

## Overview & Preparation

---

### Key Vocabulary

Practice • Progress • Plateau • Routine • Dedication • Improve • Skill • Focus • Breakthrough • Consistency

### Materials Needed

- The personalized story
- Simple skill materials (jump rope, origami paper, or drawing prompts)
- Progress tracker charts
- Paper and crayons
- Timer

## Before Reading

---

### Connection Question

*What's something you're getting better at because you practice? How long did it take before you noticed improvement?*

### Background Building

The hero sees someone do something AMAZING and thinks: "I want to do THAT!" First attempts are terrible. Practice feels repetitive. The plateau hits — that flat, frustrating stretch where nothing seems to improve. The hero almost quits. But then they notice a TINY improvement — just a little bit better than yesterday. And that tiny bit is enough fuel to keep going until the breakthrough.

## During Reading — Pause Points

---

- **When the hero's first attempt is terrible** — That didn't go well! But was it supposed to be perfect the first time? How do YOU feel when you try something new and it's hard?
- **When the hero hits the plateau and nothing seems to improve** — The hero is practicing every day but can't see any improvement. This is called a plateau. Have you ever felt stuck like this?
- **When the hero notices the tiny improvement** — Just a LITTLE bit better than yesterday! But that tiny bit means everything. Why do small improvements matter so much?

## Discussion Questions

---

1. The hero practiced every day, even when it was boring and felt stuck. What makes people keep practicing when it's not fun?
  - ↳ What keeps YOU going when practice feels hard?
2. The plateau — the flat part where you can't see improvement — is where most people quit. Why?
  - ↳ What if the breakthrough is just on the other side of the plateau?
3. The hero celebrated a TINY improvement. Why is "a little better than yesterday" worth celebrating?
  - ↳ What small improvement have you made recently that you're proud of?
4. At the end, the hero shares their skill with others. Why does teaching what you've learned matter?
  - ↳ What could you teach someone else?

## Facilitation Tips

---

Bring a real skill-building activity into the lesson (origami, jump rope, etc.). Let children experience the frustration of "not yet" and the thrill of even tiny progress. The physical experience makes the lesson stick.

## Emotional Payoff

---

*The breakthrough doesn't come from talent — it comes from showing up every single day. The hero's journey proves that "practice makes progress" (not perfection), and that the plateau is secretly where the most growth is happening, even though you can't see it.*

---

## After Reading Activities

---

### The 5-Minute Skill Challenge

Duration: 15 min | Materials: Simple skill (paper airplane folding, balancing on one foot, drawing a star)

Everyone tries the same skill for 5 minutes. Record your first attempt. Practice. Record your last attempt. Compare. Even in 5 minutes, there's a difference! Discuss: imagine doing this every day for a month.

### Progress Tracker Design

Duration: 10 min | Materials: Graph paper or tracker template, stickers

Each child designs a personal progress tracker for something they're working on. Each day they practice, they add a sticker. The visual streak becomes motivating. Discuss: how does SEEING your practice feel different from just doing it?

### Teach a Friend

Duration: 10 min | Materials: None

Pair up. Each child teaches their partner something they know how to do (tie a knot, draw a cat, snap fingers). The teacher discovers how much they actually KNOW. Discuss: teaching someone else is proof of your own progress.

## Writing Prompts

---

- Draw a "progress mountain": the start at the bottom, the plateau in the middle, and the breakthrough at the top. Where are you right now on something you're learning?
- Write a letter to yourself on a day when practice feels boring. What would you say to keep going?
- What do you want to be really good at in one year? What's your daily practice plan?

## Home Connection

---

### Family Letter

Dear Families,

Today we read "Practice Makes Progress," about the journey from beginner to breakthrough through daily practice. Your child learned about the "plateau" — the flat stretch where improvement is invisible but growing underground. They designed a progress tracker and discovered that "a little better than yesterday" is worth celebrating.

Here is how you can continue this learning at home:

- Help your child identify one skill to practice daily (even 5 minutes counts!)
- Celebrate EFFORT, not results: "I noticed you practiced today — that's dedication!"
- Share your own "practice story" — something YOU got better at through repetition

With warmth,

Your Child's Teacher

### Related Books

---

- The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires
- Whistle for Willie by Ezra Jack Keats
- Flight School by Lita Judge
- After the Fall by Dan Santat