

CONCEPTUALIZING HIGH-UPTAKE PRACTICES

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Researchers have begun to explore professional development (PD) aimed at incremental improvements to instruction (Litke, 2020; Star, 2016). The intention of such an approach is to enact modest improvements to teachers' existing instruction in ways that recognize and build from teachers' current practice. If we are to seriously entertain the notion of incremental PD, we must identify and study practices that would undergird such an approach. Our purpose is to propose a definition for such practices which we term high-uptake practices.

We define high-uptake practices as pedagogical actions that are readily and frequently utilized by teachers. Consistent with three potentially overlapping dimensions of practicality theory, high-uptake practices are clearly articulated teacher actions (instrumentality), aligned with a teacher's current instructional approach and context (congruence), and the expected benefit from implementing the practice exceeds the effort and resources to enact it (cost) (Doyle & Ponder, 1977; Janssen et al., 2013). High-uptake practices are not contingent upon the quality of the action, but rather by the rate at which teachers incorporate them into their instructional repertoire. Consider if we were to suggest teachers adjust students' independent work time to include not only solving individual problems but also selecting two problems that contrast with one another. We hypothesize that the practice of choosing contrasting problems would be a high-uptake practice because it is:

- a specific action that can be implemented without delay (i.e., teachers do not have to wait for a certain lesson or content topic to try it out; instrumentality & cost);
- presented to teachers who already employ independent work time and is close enough to current practice that teachers have confidence in enacting it (congruence); and
- a change that aligns with teachers' underlying goals (e.g., higher student engagement by avoiding monotony, helping students to identify bigger ideas rather than only procedural execution; cost and congruence).

Presently we are working to determine whether practices we hypothesize as high-uptake actually are high-uptake. We will specify what separates a high-uptake practice from, say, a medium- or low-uptake practice. This process will allow us to understand what and why practices are high-uptake so we can then study how such practices impact students' learning.

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