



Incremental Professional Development in Algebra: Considering Teachers' Opinions on Instructional Nudges

Samuel Otten

College of Education & Human Development
University of Missouri, Columbia (USA)
ottensa@missouri.edu

Amber G. Candela

College of Education
University of Missouri, Saint Louis (USA)
candela@umsl.edu

Zandra de Araujo

Lastinger Center for Learning
University of Florida (USA)
zdearaujo@coe.ufl.edu

This paper reports on a five-year study of incremental professional development (PD) with 40 algebra teachers across the United States (www.PracticeDrivenPD.com). The PD differed substantially from other university-based efforts to transform instruction; rather, this PD consisted of one-page instructional nudges (Otten et al., 2025) shared asynchronously online, with no further training on how to implement the nudges. Teachers were free to choose which nudges to implement and how. Later, the researchers conducted interviews wherein teachers shared their perspectives on instructional nudges they implemented (or at least remembered).

Findings include the fact that all 40 teachers reported trying, over the course of an academic year, at least 3 of the 18 nudges shared (mean=11). All teachers also reported at least one nudge used regularly in their teaching (mean=3). Teachers were quite idiosyncratic in their nudge preferences, but the full paper reports five nudges viewed most positively and three nudges viewed least positively. The reasons teachers expressed with regard to their nudge preferences often centred on perceived benefits for student learning, but teachers also noted classroom management concerns and the students (or the teacher) simply responding well to the nudge.

The paper includes a discussion of what these findings mean for the viability of this nudge-based approach to incremental PD and the nuances around offering nudges that are close enough to teachers' current practice that they are willing to try them but not so familiar or rudimentary as to be deemed unnecessary of consideration as an instructional suggestion.

References

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For more information, please refer to the following paper presented at the 48th Annual Conference of MERGA in July 2026.
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