

The CALLA handbook: Implementing the cognitive academic language learning approach.

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# CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Learning Approach

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## CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language

Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley (1994)

Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company

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The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model of students learning English as a second language in American schools (p.3). Based largely integrates academic language development, content area instruction and explicit instruction language acquisition. Since their first proposal of this approach in 1986, Chamot and O'Malley model, enlarging and refining it. The *CALLA Handbook* is the latest outcome of this continuing effort to provide a foundation for using the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach program, and suggestions for implementing CALLA in major subject areas of the curriculum.

The handbook falls into three major parts, each consisting of four chapters. Part 1 is an introduction

components, and the related instructional concepts of CALLA. The theoretical basis of the related concepts such as language across the curriculum, language experience approach, and the components of CALLA, including academic content, learning strategies, and academic language, but are discussed in greater detail in chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

Part 2 is concerned with CALLA program design. Chapter 5 of this section discusses planning and the assessment of students' progress in CALLA. It is suggested that the teacher can use alternative assessment, the appropriate forms to match the knowledge and skills being measured of the CALLA program. The authors state that the administrators have an essential role in the evaluation of a CALLA program (p.139): identifying teachers for CALLA projects, establishing and enlisting local and district-wide support, implementing the CALLA program, and providing resources. They also identify the 12 contexts in which CALLA has been and can be implemented, such as beginning pull-out ESL programs. [-1-]

The final part of the handbook focuses on implementation of CALLA in the classroom. He uses science, mathematics, social studies, and literature to illustrate how CALLA principles can be applied to various subject areas. The handbook also contains a preface, a list of tables, a section of reference, and an impressive outline for an integrated CALLA unit.

One of the important characteristics of the handbook is its practical orientation. First, the content is kept to a minimum, briefly and clearly done in certain sections of part 1. The rest of the book focuses on the program and the implementation of CALLA. Second, each of the first 8 chapters has a section that summarizes the understanding of the main ideas or points discussed in the chapter. The practical nature of the handbook is also reflected in the inclusion of tables containing useful ideas, information, and suggestions concerning CALLA implementation.

Another impressive characteristic of the handbook is its ingenious design. Each chapter begins with a summary of its contents. Major ideas and points of each section are summarized and highlighted. For example, in the section discussing types of learning strategies: Metacognitive Strategies: used in planning and evaluating achievement. Metacognitive Knowledge: understanding one's own learning process and selecting strategies that should be effective. Cognitive Strategies: manipulating the material to be learned through repetition, elaboration. Social/Affective Strategies: interacting with others for learning or using affective strategies. The handbook contains a number of excellent drawings and graphs for illustration of important ideas and concepts.

A further distinct feature of the handbook is its logical organization. The book begins with the theoretical basis of CALLA, then examines the design of the CALLA program and finally moves to a discussion of its implementation in the classroom. This logical organization makes it possible for the book to be used not only as a resource for staff development.

Some criticism may be directed toward chapter 8, where the authors have tried to apply CALLA to intermediate level ESL students in upper elementary and secondary schools. The handbook is intended to respond to the needs of these students and has been constantly tested and improved. It may have wide applications. However, trying to apply the model to a dozen contexts seems to be a stretch.

In conclusion, the handbook can be used both as a resource book and textbook for classroom teachers. It can be used to implement the CALLA model, provided they are aware of its limitations. The handbook can also be used by teachers who wish to draw some practical ideas and to adapt some activities to their own teaching situations.

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[-3-]

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