

# Introduction and Background



Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is an important component of every student’s education. To thrive in a social world, students must learn social and emotional skills, such as controlling their impulses, interpreting and understanding emotions, motivating themselves, and developing positive attitudes toward school and community (Pianta & La Paro, 2003; Raver, 2002). Research has shown that curricula and programs that explicitly teach social skills and address the emotional needs of students translate into improved outcomes for students on academic performance.

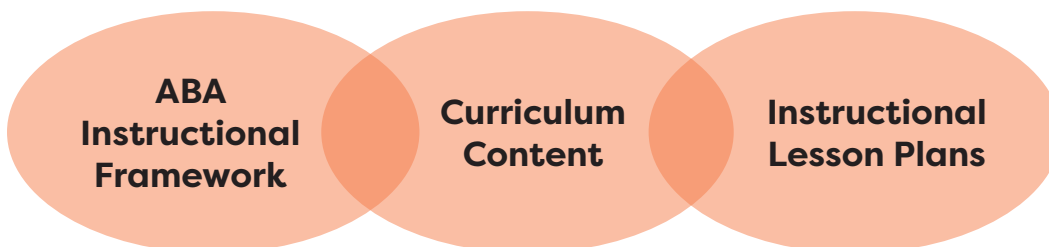
A meta-analysis of school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs was conducted to determine the efficacy of these programs on student outcomes (Durlak, Weissberg, Schellinger, Dymnicki and Taylor, 2011). The study found that compared to controls, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance on standardized assessments.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is commonly considered a set of non-academic skills that students need to set goals, manage behavior, build relationships, and process and remember information. These skills are essential to a student’s success in school, work, home, and community ([exploresel.gse.harvard.edu](http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu)).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five skill domains of social and emotional learning (<https://y4y.ed.gov>, 2018) that need to be addressed. The five domains are: self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These five domains are inter-related and are considered central to social and emotional learning. The SOLER program provides instruction that directly connects to each of these domains and lays the foundation for students with special needs to learn SEL skills. Many of the skills taught in the SOLER curriculum go across more than one domain to lay a positive foundation for learning. The chart below shows the relationship between the SOLER curriculum areas and domains identified by the CASEL project.

SEL Domains Identified by the CASEL Project					
SOLER Curriculum Areas	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision-Making
Communication			X	X	
Friendship	X	X	X	X	X
Self-Awareness	X				
Self-Management		X			
Perspective Taking	X	X	X	X	X
Connections			X	X	X

The Social Emotional and Regulation (SOLER) curriculum has adopted the conceptual process shown below to provide an evidence-based program for students needing instruction in SEL skills. All three components are important and, integrated together, form a comprehensive curriculum for elementary age students in social and emotional learning.



## Instructional Framework

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) forms the basis of the curriculum. Using behavior-based interventions early on can set students up for a successful, productive path. The work of practitioners and researchers over the last 50 years has demonstrated that Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) provides an effective set of principles for teaching students who have autism spectrum disorder (Koegel et al., 1999; Lovaas, 1987; Schreibman, 2000; Simpson, 2005).

SOLER uses many of the behavior intervention strategies described in the National Standards Report (National Autism Center, 2015) for an evidence-based program. Behavior interventions according to the report are comprised of antecedent and consequent interventions. The SOLER curriculum provides antecedent interventions such as visual supports, prompting, social narratives, modeling, and video modeling. SOLER consequent interventions include reinforcement, group contingencies, prompting, verbal praise, and error correction, when needed. These procedures apply the basic principles of behavior change to reduce challenging behaviors and to teach functional alternative behaviors.

With the ABA process, an instructor has tools for students who have difficulty learning from more traditional didactic instructional procedures or by imitating other children. The step-by-step instructional process is designed to be individualized for each student.

The curriculum incorporates social skill teaching strategies identified as established practices by the National Standards Report (2015) from the National Autism Center. These social skill practices include role play, social narratives, video-modeling, self-monitoring, token reinforcement systems, and peer-based interventions.

## Curriculum Content

The ABA process identifies the teaching procedures; it is equally important to identify the curriculum content or “what” to teach. Curriculum areas in SOLER include:

<b>Communication</b>	Includes important cognitive skills such as attention and focus, vocabulary comprehension, conversational skills, and identifying social norms.
<b>Friendship</b>	Includes cooperation and play skills, identifying shared interests, social play norms, and compromising.
<b>Self-Awareness</b>	Includes identifying social cues, emotions, self-advocacy, growth mindset, and self-confidence.
<b>Self-Management</b>	Includes self-control, emotional regulation, managing stress, working towards attaining goals, organizing time, and planning.
<b>Perspective Taking</b>	Includes perspective taking, responding to differences, impacting others, and identifying thoughts and feelings.
<b>Connections</b>	Includes collaboration, conflict resolution, empathy, and adjusting behavior to social settings.

## Instructional Lesson Plans

SOLER’s manualized and lesson-based approach integrates the instructional procedures with appropriate social and emotional skill content. Lesson plans provide a road map for instructors to move through the skills in a sequential order and to use common language throughout the curriculum. Interactive activities allow for multiple practice of skills in a variety of ways to promote generalization. Each lesson includes instructional ideas for learners who need additional instruction and/or practice to master skills. Data collection is comprehensive and connects baseline, progress, and mastery to provide data-driven decision making.

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