



The SCERTS® Model

Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin & Laurent, 2007

What is SCERTS?

SCERTS® is an innovative educational model for working with children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families. It provides specific guidelines for helping a child become a competent and confident social communicator, while preventing problem behaviors that interfere with learning and the development of relationships. It also is designed to help families, educators and therapists work cooperatively as a team, in a carefully coordinated manner, to maximize progress in supporting a child.

The acronym "SCERTS" refers to the focus on:

"SC" - Social Communication – the development of spontaneous, functional communication, emotional expression, and secure and trusting relationships with children and adults;

"ER" - Emotional Regulation – the development of the ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state to cope with everyday stress, and to be most available for learning and interacting;

"TS" – Transactional Support – the development and implementation of supports to help partners respond to the child's needs and interests, modify and adapt the environment, and provide tools to enhance learning (e.g., picture communication, written schedules, and sensory supports). Specific plans are also developed to provide educational and emotional support to families, and to foster teamwork among professionals.

The SCERTS model targets the most significant challenges faced by children with ASD and their families. This is accomplished through family-professional partnerships (family-centered care), and by prioritizing the abilities and supports that will lead to the most positive long-term outcomes as indicated by the [National Research Council \(2001; Educating Children with Autism\)](#). As such, it provides family members and educational teams with a plan for implementing a comprehensive and evidence-based program that will improve quality of life for children and families.

The SCERTS Model can be used with children and older individuals across a range of developmental abilities, including nonverbal and verbal individuals. It is a lifespan model that can be used from initial diagnosis, throughout the school years, and beyond. It can be adapted to meet the unique demands of different social settings for younger and older individuals with ASD including home, school, community, and ultimately vocational settings.

The SCERTS Model includes a well-coordinated assessment process that helps a team measure the child's progress, and determine the necessary supports to be used by the child's social partners (educators, peers and family members). This assessment process ensures that:

- functional, meaningful, and developmentally-appropriate goals and objectives are selected
- individual differences in a child's style of learning, interests, and motivations are respected
- the culture and lifestyle of the family are understood and respected
- the child is engaged in meaningful and purposeful activities throughout the day
- supports are developed and used consistently across partners, activities, and environments
- a child's progress is systematically charted over time
- program quality is measured frequently to assure accountability

How does SCERTS compare to other approaches?

The SCERTS curriculum provides a systematic method that ensures that specific skills and appropriate supports, stated as educational objectives, are selected and applied in a consistent manner across a child's day. This process allows families and educational teams to draw from a wide range of effective practices that are available, and to build upon their current knowledge and abilities in providing an effective program. One of the most unique qualities of SCERTS is that it can incorporate practices from other approaches including contemporary ABA (e.g., Pivotal Response Treatment, LEAP), TEACCH, Floortime, RDI, Hanen, and Social Stories[®]. The SCERTS Model differs most notably from the focus of "traditional" ABA, an approach that typically targets children's responses in adult directed Discrete Trials, by promoting child-initiated communication in everyday activities, and in drawing extensively from research on child and human development. The SCERTS Model is most concerned with helping persons with autism achieve "Authentic Progress", which is defined as the ability to learn and spontaneously apply functional and relevant skills in a variety of settings and with a variety of partners.

Who developed SCERTS?

The SCERTS Model collaborators include the team of Barry Prizant, Amy Wetherby, Emily Rubin, and Amy Laurent, who have training in Speech-Language Pathology, Special Education, Behavioral and Developmental Psychology, Occupational Therapy and Family-Centered Practice. The SCERTS Collaborators have more than 100 years experience in university, hospital, clinical and educational settings, are actively involved in clinical work, research, and educational consultation. The collaborators have published extensively in scholarly journals and volumes on ASD and related disabilities. A comprehensive two-volume manual provides detailed guidance for assessment and intervention efforts (Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin, Laurent, & Rydell, 2006).

Comments from Parents and Professionals:

"I love SCERTS! It makes sense to me and fits our family's lifestyle. It is a results oriented program. Our family enjoys watching our child accomplish SCERTS objectives on his way to becoming a successful communicator. It is relieving to know that we are focusing on what will best help him on this journey by using the SCERTS grids and transactional supports."

Sheri, parent of a 5 year old with ASD.

"The SCERTS Model embodies a framework that is consistent, yet its structure allows for the implementation of a variety of teaching methodologies based on the individual needs of the child. The SCERTS Assessment Process provides all individuals involved (with our students) with a shared understanding when discussing a child's needs, laying the groundwork for consistency within our schools, and coordinated transition between schools".

Sue, Special Education Director

Where can I find out more about SCERTS and the SCERTS Manual?

For further information, including published articles on SCERTS and a detailed list of FAQ's, click here: www.SCERTS.com.

For a listing of research supporting the SCERTS model, click here: www.scerts.com/research_corner.htm.

For further information about the SCERTS manual, click here: www.brookespublishing.com/store/books/prizant-8183.

Prizant, B., Wetherby, A., Rubin, E., Laurent, A., & Rydell, P. (2006). *The SCERTS Model: A Comprehensive Educational Approach for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

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