



PROJECT ACCESS FACT SHEET #51



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The SCERTS® Model [Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin & Laurent, 2007]

What is SCERTS?

This is an educational model or framework, having a specific set of core values and guiding principles, which prioritize and systematically address three domains relevant to Autism intervention through three clearly defined levels of communicative development, embracing other focused, evidence-based approaches. The SCERTS model is NOT exclusive of other educational approaches or strategies. The SCERTS model is NOT an assessment to determine presence of Autism. The SCERTS model IS relationship-based, person centered, and culturally sensitive. The SCERTS model IS a developmentally-based curriculum providing a “menu” of goals and objectives to help children with Autism become confident social communicators and prevent behaviors that interfere with learning and building relationships. The SCERTS model IS also the only EBP specifically endorsed by individuals with ASD through the Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN).

SCERTS core values and guiding principles:

1. Highest priority – Development of spontaneous, functional communication abilities and emotional regulatory capacities.
2. Principles and research on child development frame assessment and educational efforts. Goals and activities are developmentally appropriate and functional.
3. All domains of a child’s development (e.g., communicative, socioemotional, cognitive, and motor) are viewed as interrelated and interdependent. Assessment and educational efforts must address these relationships.
4. All behavior is viewed as purposeful serving a variety of functions (e.g., communication, emotional regulation). For children who display unconventional or problem behaviors, there is an emphasis on developing a range of supports for emotional regulation.
5. A child’s unique learning profile of strengths and weaknesses determines appropriate accommodations for facilitating competence in the domains of social-communication and emotional regulation.
6. Natural routines across home, school, and community environments provide the contexts for learning and for developing positive relationships. Progress is measured in daily experiences and routines.

7. It is the primary responsibility of professionals to establish positive relationships with children and with family members. All children and family members are treated with dignity and respect.
8. Family members are considered experts about their child. Assessment and educational efforts are viewed as collaborative processes with family members.

SCERTS is an acronym that stands for the three competency domains addressed in the SCERTS curriculum for students with Autism:

SC – Social Communication **ER** – Emotional Regulation **TS** – Transactional Support

SC = “how people engage people” ~ B. Prizant (spontaneous, functional communication, emotional expression, and development of secure and trusting relationships)

ER = “most available for learning and engagement” ~ B. Prizant (ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state to cope with everyday stress)

TS = systematic ways to support children with ASD and their families and each other as service providers

SCERTS identifies three levels of communicative development “partner stages” corresponding to three curricular levels of goals and objectives, and the model itself emphasizes multi-modal communication:

1. Social Partner –defined as individuals who use “pre-symbolic means to communicate”. Performance expected from 0-18 months of typical development or generally considered *nonverbal*.
2. Language Partner –defined as individuals using “symbolic means to communicate”. Specifically, students have at least 3 to 100 differing and accurate intentional forms of functional communication.
3. Conversational Partner –defined as individuals who use “sentence and conversational level discourse to communicate”. This group also includes those students who would perform within normal limits on language assessments.

Through these fundamental aspects the SCERTS model is a **Comprehensive Educational Approach** that prioritizes students’ present level of abilities as a building block to address the most significant challenges individuals with Autism face, social communicative skills, rigidity, & repetitive behaviors, through the lens of emotional regulation in a coordinated multidisciplinary team addressing student and family and educator needs to facilitate the most positive long-term learner outcomes as indicated by the US National Research Council ([2001](#)).

How it Works!

1. The child's "partner stage" of development is determined then,
2. observations are conducted using the *SCERTS Assessment Process (SAP)* in each of the three competency domains addressed in the SCERTS curriculum (SC, ER, TS) and scored 0-not met, 1-inconsistent or with help, 2-met consistently.
3. Four to Eight items scored as '0' or '1' from **SC** and **ER** categories are selected as the goals for intervention, and the coordinating **TS** partner goals for interpersonal and learning support by educators are selected. (*SAP Activity Planning Form* also avail to assist with assigning **TS** responsibilities to educators/partners)

!The *SAP* observation assessment is also the "menu" of curricular goals!

4. Intervention begins for goals selected using any other EBP strategies appropriate for the child, adhering to SCERTS core values and data is collected on student progress and educator/personnel accountability providing the selected **Transactional Supports**. The SCERTS Assessment, *SAP* form can also be used at quarterly intervals to monitor progress.

Who can use it?

Everyone! No special training required, just a belief in the core values to guide your collaborative intervention using other *focused* EBP and use of the SCERTS manuals. Introductory and advanced trainings available at www.barryprizant.com. Other *comprehensive* programs can also be incorporated such as the Division TEACCH - Structured Teaching method and the Ziggurat Model. See additional FACT sheets in these and the overlap.

Find more information

- www.SCERTS.com also has a hyperlink to [A Slideshow Introduction to the SCERTS® Model](http://www.scerts.com/docs/scerts_introduction_june_2010.ppt) (PPT) (http://www.scerts.com/docs/scerts_introduction_june_2010.ppt)
- <http://www.autismpodcast.org/episode-60-the-scerts-model-with-dr-barry-prizant/> Audio Podcast
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKVttP3Rfag> YouTube video of an early intervention group using SCERTS
- More research: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8578.12030/epdf> in the British Journal of Special Education, 2013 "Autism and multidisciplinary teamwork through the SCERTS Model" and http://www.scerts.com/docs/scerts_good_autism_practice_may_2010.pdf in Good Autism Practice, May 2010