

The SCERTS Model

This is the model most used in Lambeth schools.

This has been described as one of the ‘new generation’ of interventions and approaches for children with Autism. It was devised in response to the call from the National Academy of Sciences as existing models for addressing the needs of children with Autism were found to have limited impact, with no one approach being significantly better than another in terms of outcome (National Research Council, 2001).

The SCERTS model was developed by a highly skilled group of clinicians and practitioners and reflects clinical experience and research spanning over thirty years. It particularly addresses some of the main areas for development for a young child with Autism by focusing on:

- Social Communication (SC)
- Emotional Regulation (ER)
- Transactional Support (TS)

The Social Communication component of SCERTS focuses on the development of communication and positive participation in social activities. With an emphasis on functional communication, the model supports the development of joint attention (helping your child to become more able to participate in reciprocal interactions with others).

Increased competency in joint attention can result in an increased ability to share attention and emotions as well as to express intentions with a social partner.

Another prioritised communication skill is symbol use (a means to communicate which may include signs, picture symbols systems to support speech). For some children, using picture or symbol systems to communicate can lead to increasingly more sophisticated and abstract means to play and communicate with others.

Emotional Regulation supports your child’s ability to regulate their levels of emotional arousal and, in doing so, supports their ‘availability’ for learning (because children need to be emotionally calm to enhance their ability to learn).

In the SCERTS model this is undertaken at three different levels:

- self-regulation: the capacity to remain organised and focused despite potentially stressful events (which may be positive or negative)
- mutual regulation: the capacity to seek assistance and/or accept support from others to restore emotional regulation in situations of emotional ‘dysregulation’
- recovery from dysregulation: the capacity to use self and or mutual regulation strategies to support a return to an appropriate level of emotional regulation

Transactional Support focuses on the environmental factors (both physical and human) that can best support your child. It may include any of the following:

- interpersonal supports consider the necessary and effective adjustments made by any of the people who successfully communicate with your child, to support positive, well regulated interaction and learning
- learning and education supports consider the necessary and effective modifications to the environment to support access to activities and learning. An example would be the use of visually based systems
- family support involves you, the immediate carers, in collaboration and information sharing as well as participation in the development of appropriate strategies to support the social communication, emotional regulation and daily living skills for your child.

The SCERTS model is systematic but individualised for each child. It is flexible with a hierarchy of goals addressed through activities which are consistent, structured and predictable.

The SCERTS Assessment Process is used to inform IEP target setting.

The framework provided by SCERTS is based on a set of core values and guiding principles:

1. the development of spontaneous, functional communication abilities and emotional regulatory capacities are of the highest priority in educational and treatment efforts.
2. principles and research on child development frame assessment and educational efforts. Goals and activities are developmentally appropriate and functional, relative to child's adaptive abilities and the necessary skills for maximising enjoyment, success, and independence in daily experiences.
3. all domains of a child's development (e.g. communicative, socio-emotional, cognitive, motor) are interrelated and interdependent. Assessment and educational efforts must address these relationships.
4. all behaviour is viewed as purposeful. Functions of behaviour may include communication, emotional regulation and engagement in adaptive skills. For children who display unconventional or problem behaviours, there is an emphasis on determining the function of the behaviour and supporting the development of more appropriate ways to accomplish those functions.
5. a child's unique learning profile of strengths and weaknesses plays a critical role in determining 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 educational and treatment contexts for learning, and for the development of

positive relationships. Progress is measured in reference to increasing competence and active participation in daily experiences and routines.

7. it is the primary responsibility of professionals to establish positive relationships with children and with family members. All 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, and principles of family-centred practice are advocated to build consensus with the family and enhance the collaborative process.

The SCERTS Model: Enhancing Communication and Socioemotional Abilities of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Barry Prizant with Amy Wetherby, Emily Rubin, Amy Laurent, Patrick Rydell. Published: 2005, National Professionals Resources, Inc.

<http://www.scerts.com/>

Applied Behaviour Analysis

This approach examines the causes and consequences of a child's or young person's behaviour and then develops interventions based on the information. Applied Behaviour Analysis can address any behaviour, both excesses and deficits, and is most effective when used intensively (30 – 40 hours a week). The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is part of this programme of interventions.

Behaviour analysis focuses on the principles of how we learn. Positive reinforcement is one of these principles. When behaviour is rewarded it is more likely to be repeated. This system also may work towards reducing unwanted behaviours which may interfere with learning.

Techniques are designed to be used in both schools and at home, or within the wider community. They can foster such skills as looking, listening, imitating as well as complex skills such as reading and sharing.

Interventions should be customized to the individual learner.

This requires:

Planning and Ongoing Assessment:

- Treatment goals –long term and short term
- Discrete trial training i.e., breaking down the components of a skill
- Ongoing objective measurement of success
- Adjustment of procedures as needed
- Regular meetings with the family

ABA Techniques and Philosophy:

- Use of behaviour- analytic procedures
- Family carers receive training
- Structured daily opportunities to practice and acquire skills
- Continuous positive reinforcement for useful and appropriate behaviour
- No reinforcement for behaviours which prevent learning

Useful Contacts:

www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk

www.autismspeaks.org

www.childautism.org.uk

www.centreforautism.com

www.autism-help.org

Consultants and Clinic:

www.aba-easysteps.co.uk

TEACCH

Division TEACCH is a state- wide evidence based programme in North Carolina USA catering for individuals of all ages with autism spectrum. The philosophy focuses on supporting individuals to develop independence and to reduce stress and anxiety. (The now dated acronym stands for Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication of Handicapped Children).

Key components of the TEACCH philosophy are based on the premise that individuals with autism spectrum benefit greatly from:

- Structure
- Environments with few distractions
- Physical organisation of tasks
- Scheduling
- Opportunities to learn through visual resources
- Clear transitions
- Behaviour based antecedents and consequences across key strategies
- Opportunities to use a workstation on a daily basis

Workstations should be able to help the child answer these questions:

- What am I expected to do?
- How much work do I have to do?
- How do I know when I have finished?
- What do I do next?

Workstations should:

- Have work the individual can access without support
- Use activities which are interesting to them
- Require little or no organisation from the individual
- Involve some physical manipulation, e.g., matching/sorting/threading
- Require minimal support
- Be distraction free or with limited distractions
- Support generalisation
- Develop working from top to bottom or from left to right.

Workstations need:

- 'To do' and 'Finish' trays, preferably in red and green
- Symbols/numbers strip and corresponding ones on task containers.

Tasks need to be:

- Just above where the child is working independently
- Encouraging independence
- Built around the child's interests where possible.

Useful Contacts:

www.teacch.com

www.autism-resources.com

www.autism.org.uk

Intensive Interaction

Intensive Interaction tries to create a communication environment that is enjoyable and non-threatening to the individual on the autism spectrum, or with severe learning difficulties. In some respects, the model of the approach is taken from the way we first start to communicate with naturally developing infants, where interactions are short, and involve noises, touch and eye contact. Interactions are brief but can grow over time.

Ultimately we are looking for the individual to:

- Accept our presence
- Allow some presence in personal space
- Attend to another person (even fleetingly at first)
- Allow and use some touch
- Engage in eye contact
- Use facial expression
- Focus on body language and facial expression
- Take turns in communicative behaviour

- Take turns using vocalization which may start to have meaning
- Experiment with communication
- Learn cause and effect

Our schools use this approach because they want individuals to be active participants who are motivated to communicate and who will take the lead and feel a sense of control over the communicative situation.

Through Intensive Interaction staff can make a connection with an individual, create an enjoyable exchange, reduce challenging behaviour, and develop communication skills. To begin with, sessions may be very short, but expanded over time and be varied in activity. Sessions take place several times a day on a one-to-one basis.

<https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/>

Attention Autism

The following principles are used throughout lessons, but especially in attention and listening activity sessions devoted specifically to this area.

- Always create an irresistible desire to communicate
- Low risk speaking situations
- Capitalise on the visual learning style of children with ASC
- Staff model appropriate attention skills

This approach encourages a carefully structured environment with planned activities to reduce obsessive play and distraction. Activities begin with an exciting visual and practical demonstration, capturing the children's interest and briefing them on the task ahead.

Children learn to take turns in activities and to transfer their experiences from a group context into their play/learning. The activities are planned to provide for each child to take their learning further. There is always scope for staff to 'go with the child'; that is, to follow the children's interests or unplanned experiences in the development of the approach.

<http://best-practice.middletownautism.com/approaches-of-intervention/attention-autism/>

PECS

PECS is a unique alternative/augmentative communication system developed in the USA in 1985 by Andy Bondy, Ph.D. and Lori Frost, M.S. CCC/SLP. PECS was first implemented with pre-school students diagnosed with Autism at the Delaware Autism Program.

The findings from the program were that 76% of children placed on PECS acquired speech as either their sole communication system or augmented by a picture based system. Since then PECS has been implemented worldwide with a variety of learners of all ages who have various cognitive, physical and communication challenges.

PECS consist of six phases. It begins by teaching an individual to give a single picture of a desired item to a "communicative partner", who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them

together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to use modifiers, answer questions and comment.

<http://pecs-unitedkingdom.com/index.php>

Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD)

PODD (or Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display) communication books were developed in Australia by Gayle Porter, originally for children with cerebral palsy. Their structured organisation and emphasis on visual communication means that they are also a valuable tool for developing the communication of those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The PODD communication system is taught through a focus on natural language stimulation, where visual language is modelled alongside verbal. The adult language partner points to the symbols representing the key words of her sentence while speaking. The children therefore see picture symbols used for an entire range of functions by capable communication partners, and in doing so learn how to use this communication method within natural settings.

This way of communicating echoes how typically developing children learn language. The consistent use of picture information alongside verbal also plays to the visual strengths of ASD learners, and helps with their understanding of instructions, information and questions as well as showing them a means of expressing themselves (Cafiero 2004).

All these strategies are used alongside existing communication techniques, such as Makaton and PECS, according to each child's needs and preferences. Introduction to the use of PODD communication books can begin with the use of single sheets of topic specific vocabulary, known as Aided Language Displays, or Activity Displays. Within an educational setting, these sheets can be used consistently alongside activities such as 'playdough', 'snack' or 'phonics.' These sheets are made up using a symbol set, typically Boardmaker, to meet the vocabulary requirements of the activity in each setting.

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/how-i-do-it-using-podd-books-and-aided-language-displays-with-young-learners-with-autism-spectrum-disorder/>