



# SCERT

*The Quarterly Newsletter of The Summit Centre for Education, Research and Training*

## THE LATEST FROM SCERT:

- *Questions and Answers with Liz Pellicano*
- *SCERT 2023 - Conference Recap*
- *A Word from Dr. Jake Burack*

## FROM THE DIRECTORS' DESKS: CHARTING THE PATH FORWARD FOR SCERT

*Herman Erdogan & Armando Bertone*

As we enter a new year, we at the Summit Centre for Education, Research and Training (SCERT) are excited to embrace an expanded vision. Since 2016, SCERT has evolved significantly, spearheading research and educational innovations in neurodevelopmental studies. Our collective journey reflects a deep commitment to understanding and enhancing neurodiverse education.

Our goal now is to intensify our sharing, engagement, and information dissemination. This next phase for SCERT promises more dynamic interactions with researchers, educators, parents, and the public. We are entering an era of heightened impact and inclusivity.

Central to our mission is the integration of research with practical application, ensuring our findings make real-world differences. In this quarterly newsletter, expect updates from our research, educational endeavors, and expert insights, all reflecting SCERT's forward-looking spirit.

"Last year's words belong to last year's language. And next year's words await another voice," T.S. Eliot once said. Inspired by this, we are poised to explore new possibilities in neurodevelopmental research and education.



# IN THE REALM OF AUTISM: A CONVERSATION WITH LIZ PELLICANO

## *A Glimpse into the Mind of a Trailblazer*

In the intricate and often misunderstood world of autism research, Professor Liz Pellicano stands as a luminary. A figure renowned not just for her academic prowess but for her profound empathy and commitment to the autistic community. Pellicano's work dovetails with the ethos of SCERT, a beacon in neurodevelopmental studies. Her recent appearance at the SCERT Conference illuminated her approach to autism—a blend of science, understanding, and an unyielding commitment to those living with autism. Pellicano's specialization, deeply rooted in developmental psychology, not only challenges the conventional perceptions of autism but also harmonizes with SCERT's mission to foster an inclusive and empathetic understanding of neurodiversity.

Q: What personally drew you to the field of autism research? A: My journey into autism research began during my undergraduate years at

the University of Western Australia, where I worked with an autistic 4-year-old and his family. Their resilience and challenges opened my eyes to the realities of autism, fueling my desire to understand it better and improve the lives of those affected by it

Q: What drew you to this particular research focus? A: This focus was inspired by my conversations with autistic individuals, their families, and professionals. There's a strong need for autism science to address the everyday lives of autistic people more directly.

Q: How can autism science be reframed and conducted differently? A: Autism science needs to evolve from viewing autism as a 'disorder' to understanding it as a variation in human experience. Incorporating perspectives from autistic individuals themselves is crucial to reframe and guide our research.

Q: How can individuals on the autism spectrum be actively

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involved in research? A: Building trust with the autistic community is key. It's about creating reciprocal relationships where their expertise is valued and they are informed about research outcomes.

Q: What steps can make autism research more impactful on the ground? A: Forming strong relationships from the outset of any project is vital. It's important that autism science prioritizes real-life applications and community-based needs.

Q: How can educators adopt a capabilities approach with neurodiverse students? A: Educators should focus on what meaningful opportunities can be provided to autistic students, ensuring their interests come first and understanding that their needs might differ significantly from those of neurotypical students.

[Full 2022 Address](#)

# STUDY AT A GLANCE:

## Enhancing Attention in Neurodiverse Students Through NeuroTracker

### Abstract:

This study explores the efficacy of NeuroTracker, a cognitive-based training program, in enhancing attention and academic performance in neurodiverse adolescents. It assesses the feasibility and impact of this classroom-based intervention, highlighting its potential in educational settings for students with neurodevelopmental conditions.

### Study Highlights:

- NeuroTracker used to improve attention in classroom settings.
- Examined impact on academic performance in adolescents.
- Involvement of 26 adolescents aged 11-16 in the study attending Summit School.
- Comparison between NeuroTracker training and control tasks.
- Assessment using math and reading performance measures.
- High completion and retention rates in the program.

### Areas of Research Focus and Potential Progress:

- Feasibility of cognitive-based training in school environments.
- Potential of visual attention training to target academic improvements.
- Assessing and refining clinically validated academic measures.
- Benefits of non-verbal, visual-based tasks for attention training.
- Adaptability of training methods to student capabilities.
- Broader implementation of attention training programs in educational settings for neurodiverse students.

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## RESEARCHER SPOTLIGHT

### DR. EVE-MARIE QUINTIN

- Dr. Eve-Marie Quintin, PhD
- Research Focus: Music perception in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Investigating musical strengths in ASD, including enhanced musical memory and pitch discrimination
- Examining the interplay between cognitive skills and musical abilities
- Assessing the impact of music education on executive functioning and social skills
- Collaborating with SCERT and Summit School since 2016 to bridge research with practical applications in neurodiversity





# HARMONIZING MINDS: SCERT 2023

The annual SCERT conference, a beacon of collaboration and progress in the world of neurodiversity, once again succeeded in uniting researchers, educators, parents, and individuals with lived experiences. While SCERT marked another successful year, it was evident that these gatherings continue to grow and evolve, making them the premier research conferences in the field of education and neurodiversity.

The conference, now in its established position as a highlight of the year, has maintained its core ethos: bringing together diverse voices to discuss the latest research and best practices in the field. Jesse Heffring, Director of SCERT, emphasized the importance of this ethos, stating, "SCERT has always been about inclusivity and collaboration. Our goal is to break down barriers, foster understanding, and drive progress through shared knowledge."

One of the highlights of this year's conference were the keynote speakers.

## SCERT TESTIMONIALS





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David Evans presented "A Developmental Perspective on the Wide Range of Repetitive Behaviors and Restricted Interests," providing valuable insights into autism spectrum research. Dr. Grace Iarocci delivered an inspiring talk on "Supporting Resilience in Autistic Individuals Across the Lifespan," offering a fresh perspective on autism support.

In addition to the engaging keynotes, break-out sessions were well-attended and appreciated by attendees. The SCERT conference has always been a platform for knowledge exchange, and it was evident in the energy and enthusiasm of participants.

Another standout moment was the performance by Summit School graduate, Steven Atme. He enchanted the audience with a captivating piano recital, showcasing the talents

nurtured at Summit School and McGill Conservatory. Adding to the uniqueness of the event, the catering was partially handled by Summit School's TECC Bistro team, highlighting the capabilities of individuals on the autism spectrum. It served as a powerful reminder of the value of fostering inclusivity and providing opportunities for everyone.

As the conference concluded, the anticipation for next year's event was palpable. SCERT remains committed to its mission of bridging gaps, fostering understanding, and promoting collaboration among researchers, educators, parents, and individuals with lived experiences. With each passing year, the SCERT conference shines brighter as a symbol of unity in a traditionally fragmented field, guiding the way for a more inclusive and informed future.



# EXPLORING SCERT'S UNIQUE APPROACH WITH RESPECTED RESEARCHER DR. JAKE BURACK

Delve into SCERT's distinctive approach with renowned researcher Dr. Jake Burack. As a highly respected figure in the field of neurodiversity, Jake Burack serves as SCERT'S Scientific Director. He has extensive experience and a profound commitment to various national networks, including autism research and Indigenous youth well-being. Join us in this enlightening video as he elaborates on SCERT's unique impact and significance. Don't miss the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the SCERT difference by watching the full interview.



## SAVE THE DATE

# SCERT 2024!



**JOIN US FOR A  
TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE  
OF SHARED KNOWLEDGE AND  
COLLABORATION!**

**EARLY BIRD PRICING FOR A  
LIMITED TIME ONLY!**