SPEECH AND LANGUAGE THERAPY GUIDE

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SAMPLE

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Speech and Language KiDS by THE SLP SOLUTION

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HOW TO TEACH A CHILD DESCRIPTORS

Rationale:

Descriptors are an important part of our vocabulary. They are the words that describe other words. These can be adjectives (words that describe nouns) or adverbs (words that describe verbs). We use these throughout our everyday conversation to convey information or add interest to what we're talking about. Many children with speech and language delays have difficulty with these words and may not use them in their conversational speech. This can make their message hard to follow or become uninteresting.

Age of Mastery:

Up and Down ………………………………………………………………………..… 2 years
One/Many, Sizes (small, medium, big) …………………………………………………... 3 years
Different, Colors (red, blue, etc.) …………………………………………...……………… 4 years
Superlatives (big, bigger, biggest), Time Concepts, Thin, Whole, First, Middle, Last ……. 5 years
Opposites, Left/Right, Number Concepts ………………………………………………….. 6 years

Learning Steps:

1. 1. Choose a concept
2. Model the concept
3. Follow directions with the concept
4. Answer yes/no questions about the concept
5. Say the concept word

Sample IEP Goals:

By <Date>, Child will follow directions containing the following concepts on 4 of 5 observed opportunities on 3 consecutive data collection days: <List Concepts Here>

By <Date>, Child will answer yes/no questions about the following concepts on 4 of 5 observed opportunities on 3 consecutive data collection days: <List Concepts Here>

By <Date>, Child will use/say the following concepts on 4 of 5 observed opportunities on 3 consecutive data collection days when asked a question (such as, "what color is it"): <List Concepts Here>

VOCABULARY: DESCRIPTORS

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A CONCEPT

The first thing you will need to do when trying to teach descriptors to your child is to choose one concept to work on. The tendency is to try to teach several related concepts at the same time, such as all of the colors, or all of the shapes. However, this can be very confusing to a child with a language delay. You will want to start with one very simple concept, such as one color, one shape, big (but not big and little), etc

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Activities:

Take a look at the list of concepts on the previous page and the ages associated with them. Circle the ones that your child is not able to use correctly at this time. Choose one of these concepts, preferably one that is toward the top of the list. If one of the things you chose was a group of concepts, like "colors" or "shapes", choose one particular concept from that group. Make sure that you are specific with which concept you will target. Here is a list of specific concepts you could target with your child:

Big	Little	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Blue	Purple
Sweet	Crunchy	Soft	Chewy	Salty	Sour	Thin	Open
More	Short	Empty	Circle	Square	Rectangle	Triangle	Oval
Stinky	Quiet	Loud	Low	High	Dry	Heavy	Hairy
Hot	Rough	Bumpy	Smooth	Wet	Hard	Cold	Light

When to Move on:

When you have chosen one concept, you are ready to move on to the next step.

The concept we will target is:	

STEP TWO: MODEL A CONCEPT

Now that you have chosen your concept, it's time to model that concept for your child. Now, when I say "model", I don't mean you have to be Vanna White, though if that gets your child more interested you're more than welcome to put on a sparkly dress and hold it up! What I mean is that you will be showing your child the concept over and over again.

Activities:

Find a few different ways to show your child the concept you are working on. For example, if you chose a color, get out many things of that same color. Or, if you chose a size concept, get out many things that represent that size.

Now, here comes the tricky part, you must also get some non-examples. A non-example is something that does not fit the concept and you want it to be as far from the concept as possible. So, if you have several examples of things that are green, you will also want some non-examples that are red, yellow, or orange. These are very dissimilar colors to the one you are trying to present. Or, if you chose "big" as your concept, you could get some non-examples of things that are little. Make sure they are much smaller than the big examples you have. Try to get your non-examples to be the same type of object as your examples. So, if you have a big ball, try to find a small ball to compare it to, instead of a small car. This will help your child see that the only difference between those two objects is the size (or whatever concept you're targeting).

Next, show your child that concept over and over again while saying the name of the concept (such as the color or shape name). When you pick up a non-example, say "not _____" and use the concept word again. So you may have objects that are green and some that are "not green". Don't use the other color words or other concepts just yet, we want to focus on just the target word. Also, point out the concept when you see it other places as well, such as all of the green things on your walk.

When to Move on:

Model the new concept for your child on at least 7 different days before moving on to the next step

	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Days that I modelled the concept for my child:					

WE ARE LEARNING A DESCRIPTOR

THAT DESCRIPTOR IS:

_____

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN INCREASE UNDERSTANDING

- Get a lot of examples that represent this descriptor. For example, if it's a color, collect several things that color. Then, label that descriptor many times when you show your child something that matches that word.

- Also, find some things that do not fit the descriptor and show those to your child as well. Say "not ___" using the descriptive word to tell your child that one does not match. For example, if your target is "green", show your child some red or purple things and say "not green".

- Your child does not need to say the word at this point. We are just working to increase his understanding of the word, so it is not necessary for him to say it yet.

STEP THREE:
FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS WITH THE CONCEPT

Now that you have bombarded your child with the concept until you're blue in the face, we want your child to start following directions using the concept. Keep in mind, this is easier than having your child say the concept out loud, so make sure you take these steps in order.

Activities:

Get out the examples and non-examples that you used in the last step. Model the concept for your child a few more times as a reminder. Then, ask your child to follow a direction with the concept. You can say "give me the green ball" or "get the big car". Make sure you exaggerate the target word in the sentence so she knows which one to focus on. Then, pause for a moment to see if your child follows the direction on her own. If your child does follow the direction, give her feedback on whether or not she found the correct object. If she did, say "yes, you found the green ball!", but if she didn't you can say "oh, not green. This ball is not green. Where's the green one?" Then you can help her find the correct one. If your child does not attempt to follow the direction, help her follow the direction by moving her hand to pick up the correct object and then praise her for it, even though you had to help her. Keep doing this over and over again with different directions and different objects so your child begins to understand the concept in many different ways.

When to Move on:
When your child is able to follow simple directions using the target concept with about 80% accuracy, you are ready to move on to the next step.

Modifications:
If your child is having trouble with this, try simplifying your language down to saying "touch" and then the target word, such as "touch blue" or "touch big". Then, help her touch the correct one. Reinforce your child every time she touches the correct one, even if you had to help her. You can reinforce using a hug/tickle, a favorite toy, or a bite of her favorite snack. Then, try it again and pause to see if she does it on her own this time. If not, try just a small prompt first, like moving her hand toward the correct object and see if she'll complete the direction on her own.

	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Follows Directions Using the Concept					

WE ARE LEARNING A DESCRIPTOR

THAT DESCRIPTOR IS:

_____

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN INCREASE UNDERSTANDING

Demonstrate the descriptor to your child frequently. Use the word whenever possible to describe things around your house or out in the community.

Have your child follow directions using the descriptor. For example, if the descriptor is "yellow", you could ask your child "where's the yellow ball?". These should be requests that your child can follow without needing to say anything.

Your child does not need to say the descriptive word at this point. We are just working to increase her understanding of the word, so it is not necessary for her to say it yet.

STEP FOUR:
ANSWERING YES/NO QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CONCEPT

Once your child can follow simple directions with the concept, we want him to answer yes/no questions about the concept.

Activities:

Get out your examples and non-examples again and this time hold up one of the objects and ask "is this ___?" using the target concept. Make sure you have the non-examples present so he has something to compare it to. For example, if you says "is this big?" but there's nothing any smaller to compare it to, the term "big" kind of loses its meaning. If your child is having trouble answering yes/ no questions, you can go back to the yes/no questions guide and work on that as well.

When to Move on:

Keep doing this until your child is able to correctly answer "is this ___?" with the target concept about 80% of the time. Then, you will be ready to move on to the next step.

Modifications:

If your child is struggling, try giving him some examples. Hold up an object that is an example of that concept and say "is this ___?" Then, immediately say "yes, this is ___". Then, hold up a non-example and ask the same question again. Then, immediately say "no, this is not ____". Do this a few times and then give your child a chance to answer. You can also bring in another child or a sibling to answer the question a few times as well.

	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Follows Directions Using the Concept					

WE ARE LEARNING A DESCRIPTOR

THAT DESCRIPTOR IS:

_____

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN INCREASE UNDERSTANDING

Ask your child yes/no questions using the descriptor. For example, you could say "is this hot?" or "is this cold?"

- Make sure you only ask questions using the word listed above, if the word is "hot", don't ask about "hot" and "cold".

- Also, make sure you're asking questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" instead of something like "is this hot or cold?".

- Your child does not need to say the descriptive word during this activity. We are just working to increase his understanding of the word, so it is not necessary for him to say it yet.

STEP FIVE: SAY THE CONCEPT

Now that your child is able to follow directions with the concept and answer questions about it, you're finally ready to start having your child say the concept word out loud.

Activities:

This time when you get out your examples and non-examples, you will want to ask your child a question that will encourage her to say the concept word out loud. If you chose a color, you could say "what color is this?". Or, if you chose a texture you could say "how does it feel?". Think about the question you want to ask ahead of time. Hold up one of your examples (though have your nonexamples there as references) and ask your child the question. You may have to model the correct answer for her at first but eventually she should be able to start using the word on her own. If she still needs prompts, try saying just the first sound or first syllable of the word at first to see if she can finish the word for you. Then, you can just try mouthing the first sound. Then, you should be able to fade your prompting to not needing to cue her at all. Do this with the examples that you have been working with but also try this when you see the concept somewhere else. For example, at the store, you could find things that are the target color and say "what color is this?".

When to Move on:

When your child is able to correctly answer the question about the concept about 80% of the time, you're ready to introduce a new concept. Keep in mind that your child may confuse the two concepts at first, especially if they are similar like two colors, so have patience and just keep drilling the difference between the two.

	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:
Answers a question by saying the concept word					

WE ARE LEARNING A DESCRIPTOR

THAT DESCRIPTOR IS:

_____

HERE'S HOW YOU HELP
YOUR CHILD SAY IT

Ask your child questions that will prompt him to say the descriptor we are targeting. For example, you could say "how does it feel?" or "what color is it".

At first, you may have to tell your child the answer and have her repeat it back to you. After a while, try just telling her the first sound or syllable of the word to see if she can get the rest of it. Eventually, you should be able to ask the question and have her give you the correct descriptor.

Try asking these questions in different settings, like when you're at home but also when you're out in the community. Use this approach anywhere you see that descriptor.