



**Colorado Charter Schools
Annual Conference**

February 25-27, 2026
Denver Marriott Tech Center



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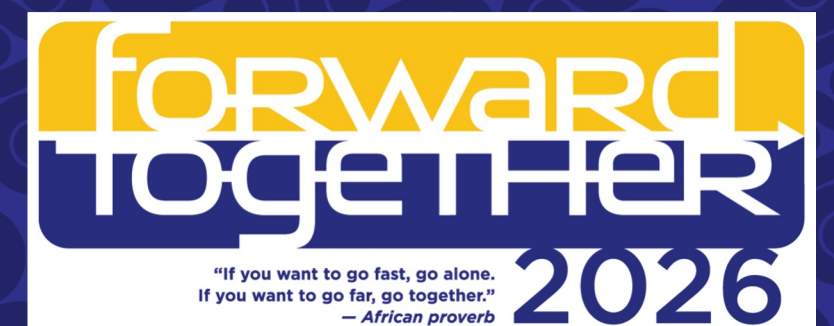


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FIXED INCOME CAPITAL MARKETS

(5) Become a clear, concise, trust-building communicator

Lee Shainis, Simplify Language

Evergreen E
February 27, 2026 | 11:00 AM – 12 PM
Enrollment and Communications



“
The
conference
at your
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Colorado League of
Charter Schools



We make it our priority to **advocate** for high-quality public **charter schools** across Colorado.



Be a part of the action.





Simplify Language

Colorado Charter League Conference – 2/27/26

Lee Shainis

www.simplifylanguage.com

Agenda

1 Why and when to simplify?

2 Tools, tips, and practice – writing and speaking

- Concise and precise
- Understandable
- Readable
- Translatable

3 Next steps and a checklist

I'll share these slides upon request.
We'll go through some of this quickly!

Example

1.

This week we worked on math skills such as patterns, shapes, and spatial awareness. We made shapes and patterns out of magnet tiles. We talked about and named different 3-D shapes. We worked on language and pre-reading skills by coming up with rhyming words and putting them in our jar. We also worked on social skills and knowledge of our selves by talking about our emotions and drawing a picture to explain why we were feeling a certain way.

2.

This week we worked on:

- Math skills like patterns, shapes, and spatial awareness by making shapes with magnet tiles and naming 3-D shapes.**
- Language and pre-reading skills by creating rhyming words.**
- Social skills and self-awareness by discussing emotions and drawing pictures about our feelings.**

Example

When language access practices are in place, language is no longer a barrier for residents to meaningfully participate in, and benefit from, information, programs, services, and activities, including civic engagement and decision-making processes.

People are more informed, involved, and trusting when they can understand you and communicate with you.

Training objectives

Learn skills to make communication easier to quickly understand.

- Literacy barriers
- Language barriers
- People who are neurodivergent
- People who prefer clear and brief communication

Improve:

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| • Access | • Recruitment | • Efficiency |
| • Translations | • Retention | • Productivity |
| • Trust | • Surveys and data | • Belonging |

Who are your audiences?

Why is this a problem?

What do people do when they don't understand?

- Pretend
- Ignore, disengage
- Misinterpret or assume
- Feel shame, excluded, dumb

We receive a lot communication!

Unpopular messages need to be extra clear.



Shift responsibility

Don't ask "Do you understand?"

Confirm comprehension without being condescending

- I want to make sure I explained this well. Which part can I explain more clearly?
- This is confusing for many people. What questions do you have?
- What feels like the next step from here?

Reflection



Small group
conversation

**Talk about your audiences and what they want from your communication.
Describe an area of communication you could improve.
What are technical words you use that some people may not understand?
How can simplifying communication impact your work?**

- Access
- Translations
- Trust
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Data and surveys
- Efficiency
- Productivity
- Belonging

AI prompt ideas to improve communication

- **Who are you?**
- **Audience?**
- **Goal?**
- **Tone?**
- **Provide 5 versions.**
- **Keep responses brief.**

Simplify and shorten

Shorten by 50%

**Simplify to 8th grade reading
level**

**What is the main purpose of
this message?**

Write or paste in your text (no more than 2000 characters)

Clear

Normal  **B** *I* U    

From launching new charter schools to strengthening existing ones, we are a partner at every stage, offering support in application reviews, contract negotiations, start-up operations, communications, and beyond.

Score and Simplify

Your Score

9 / 10

The simplified version reduced your text by 19%.

Simplified Version

We partner with charter schools at every stage, from launch to growth. We support:

- Application reviews
- Contract negotiations
- Start-up operations
- Communications

...

Simplifying tips

1 Remove excess words. Minimize fluff.

- The orientation **will take place on** October 17th.
- You will join a strategy group **as well as** a work group...
- **We would like to extend an invitation for** you to...
- The program is **dedicated to providing**...
- I visited **a number of** schools this week.
- If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

Sentence starters

- Please note that...
- It should be noted that...
- This is a reminder to...
- In addition to...
- Not only do we...
- As you may have heard...
- I want to inform you...
- Please don't hesitate to...
- We are excited to share that we are...

Practice – replace or remove

1. We will **send an email to** members.
2. We **made a decision to extend** the deadline.
3. The software **is capable of...**
4. They **conducted an evaluation of...**
5. Please see the website and **be sure to complete...**
6. The Department **is responsible for providing...**
7. **In order to be eligible** to register for our programs, applicants must...
8. Volunteers help in **a number of** different ways.
9. There are **a couple of** urgent tasks to complete.
10. **In the event that** your application is accepted, you'll receive...
11. Students who encounter multiple vulnerabilities often struggle with competing vital priorities and educational stability and are most at-risk of disconnection and withdrawal from the education system.

2 Use simple words and phrases. Avoid jargon or define it.

***Priority #1 is being understood!**

We included various **stakeholders** in the planning process.

Charter schools are public schools governed by an independent, non-profit board of directors given additional **autonomies** and held accountable through a contract with their authorizer.

We're shifting the **landscape**.

3 Avoid words with multiple meanings

- get back
- give in
- let up
- let down
- kick off
- break down
- make up
- kick back



He **passed out** at school.

- We don't just meet **the bar**, we exceed **the bar**.
- Our term **kicks off** on October 7th.
- We will **wrap up** the project this summer.
- I can't **make out** what she's saying.
- It's good to **touch base** with us every month.

Translating

We are a source of connection, dedicated to creating opportunities and spaces for voices to be heard, fostering collaboration with our families and community, and ensuring access to resources, all with a focus on building a community where students and families thrive.

Somos una fuente de conexión, dedicada a crear oportunidades y espacios para que las voces sean escuchadas, fomentando la colaboración con nuestras familias y la comunidad, y garantizando el acceso a los recursos, todo ello con un enfoque en la construcción de una comunidad donde los estudiantes y las familias prosperen.

Activity – talk through these

1. This person will **field** communication from the public.
2. This training is **in line with** others we've taken.
3. The program **runs** from January 1 – April 30th.
4. We need to **iron out** a few details.
5. We need to **iron out** some initial difficulties.
6. We need **to come up with** new ways to talk about our work.
7. The deadline to apply is **right around the corner**.
8. We're going to **streamline** the payment process.
9. You keep people **on their toes**.
10. If there's an **outstanding balance** after financial aid is applied, you will...

4

Define acronyms. No more than 2 per page.

- SOM
- GF
- IEP
- PD



5

Order

- 1. What must come first?**
- 2. What can come later?**
- 3. What can be linked?**
- 4. What can be removed?**

Create a header for this



Submit proposals for funding by 11/26

The Program funding announcements have been released. Due to delayed processing times in the system, proposal submissions will need to take place prior to the submission date. We are recommending submissions 3 business days prior to the due date of 12/2. We are closed 11/28 & 11/29, so the last date available for the submission, according to these guidelines is 11/26.

6 Simple sentence structure

Our goals were informed by community surveys.

Community surveys informed our goals.

It is not intended to say charters are the only strategy that works, nor that academics are the only outcomes that matter; rather, we are aiming to demonstrate that there are schools, including charters, helping students recover academically and we should continue to learn from them and others.

We aim to demonstrate...

Simplify speaking

7 Enunciate

- Did you
Ja
- Where is he going?
Wherzee goin?
- What are you watching?
Whatcha watchin?
- Doncha seeeyit?
- Tolja Igetidun
- I'll gettim som'in e likeslot

Sound natural

End sentences

Simplifying tips

Remove excess

Simple words and phrases

Use bullets
Short sentences
Short paragraphs

Simple sentence structure

Avoid words with multiple meanings

Limit and define acronyms

Order

Enunciate

Slow down
Pause
Limit fillers

Simplify Language Checklist

- Who is my audience? What do they already know? What do they need to know?
- What assumptions am I making about their knowledge?
- Is my purpose or call to action clear and at the beginning?
- Did I remove everything that is redundant or doesn't impact content or tone?
- Did I provide too much detail or not enough detail?
- Does the sentence structure and length make it easy to read aloud?
- Are headings clear and helpful?
- Did I include white space and avoid long paragraphs?
- Are lists used when appropriate?
- Did I clearly define technical terms that my audience might not understand?
- Did I limit acronyms and define them the first time they're introduced?
- Did I get honest feedback before sending it to a big group?
- If my audience includes English learners, did I avoid words with multiple meanings?



***Brevity is confidence.
Length is fear.***

- from the book *Smart Brevity* by Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen, and Roy Schwartz

***I didn't have time to write a short
letter, so I wrote a long one instead.***

- Blaise Pascal



Get clear on your main message.

You have permission to be simple. 😊

Next steps

1. Practice.

2. What did you learn? What will you change?

3. Get more training and spread the word 😊.

Request slides here!



www.simplifylanguage.com

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**“
Your
feedback
helps us all
move forward
together**



**Colorado League of
Charter Schools**

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