

# pAIn or pLeisure?

the future of education...

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**ADTC 2026**

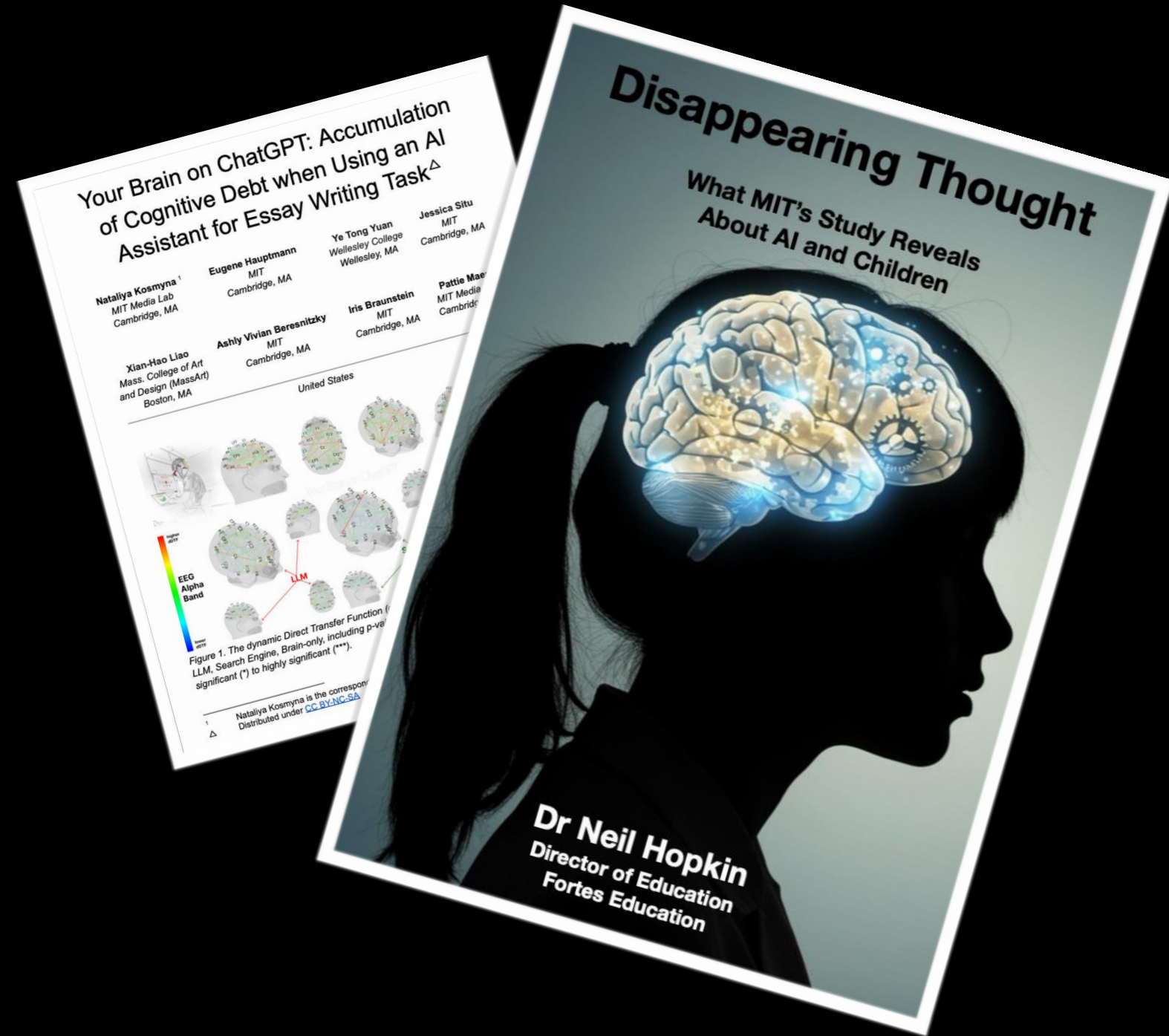
You can view this presentation  
at The Cambridge Consultancy Group

A teacher in a light blue shirt is leaning over a desk, pointing at a laptop screen. A young man in a maroon t-shirt is sitting at the desk, looking at the screen. A young woman in a light blue shirt is sitting next to him, also looking at the screen. In the background, other students are working at their desks in a classroom setting. A whiteboard with charts and a bookshelf are visible in the background.

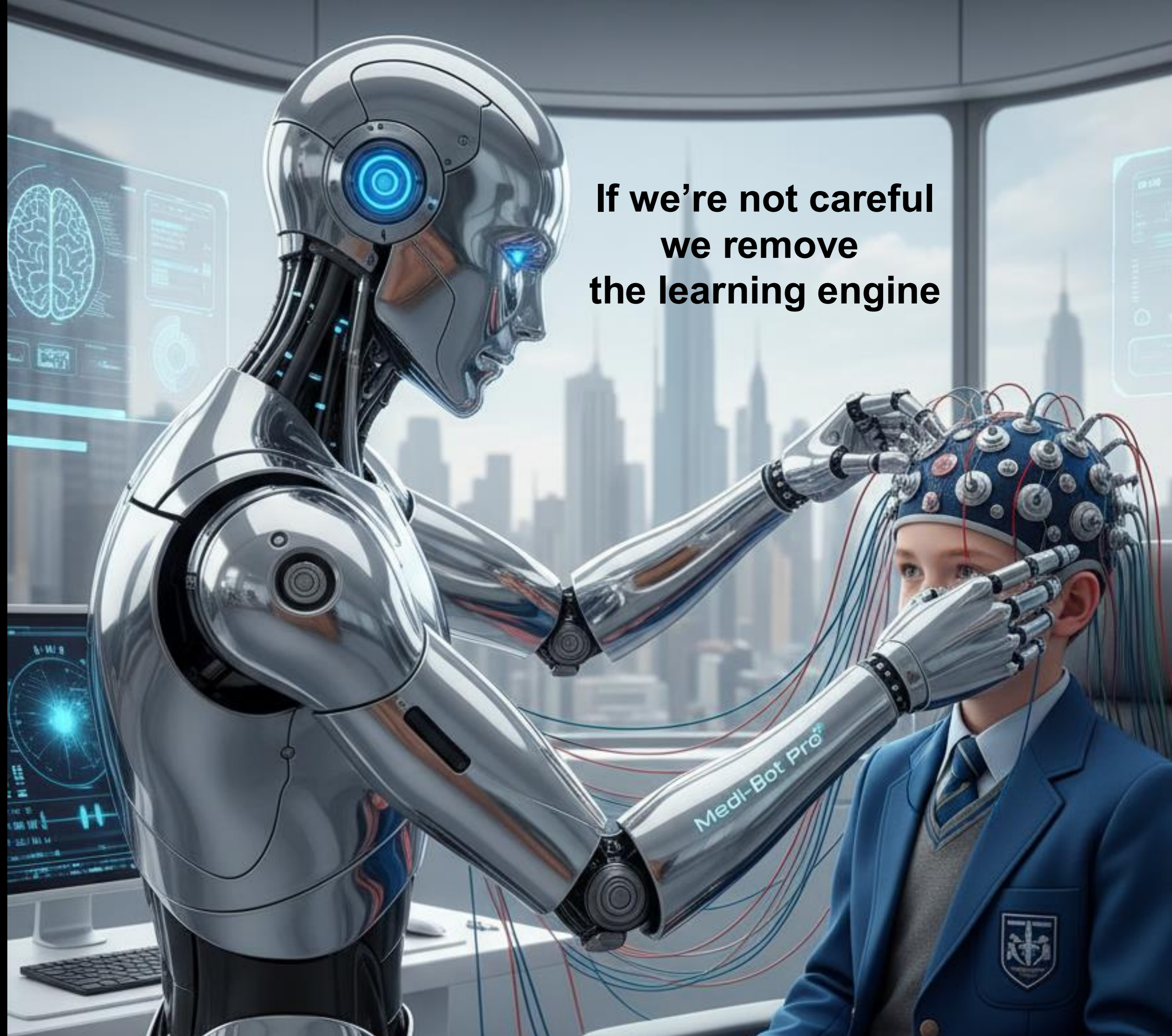
**This is not a talk**

**We are going to think**

# AI Changes the Balance Instantly



Read my report at  
[www.TheCambridgeConsultancy.com/ai](http://www.TheCambridgeConsultancy.com/ai)



If we're not careful  
we remove  
the learning engine

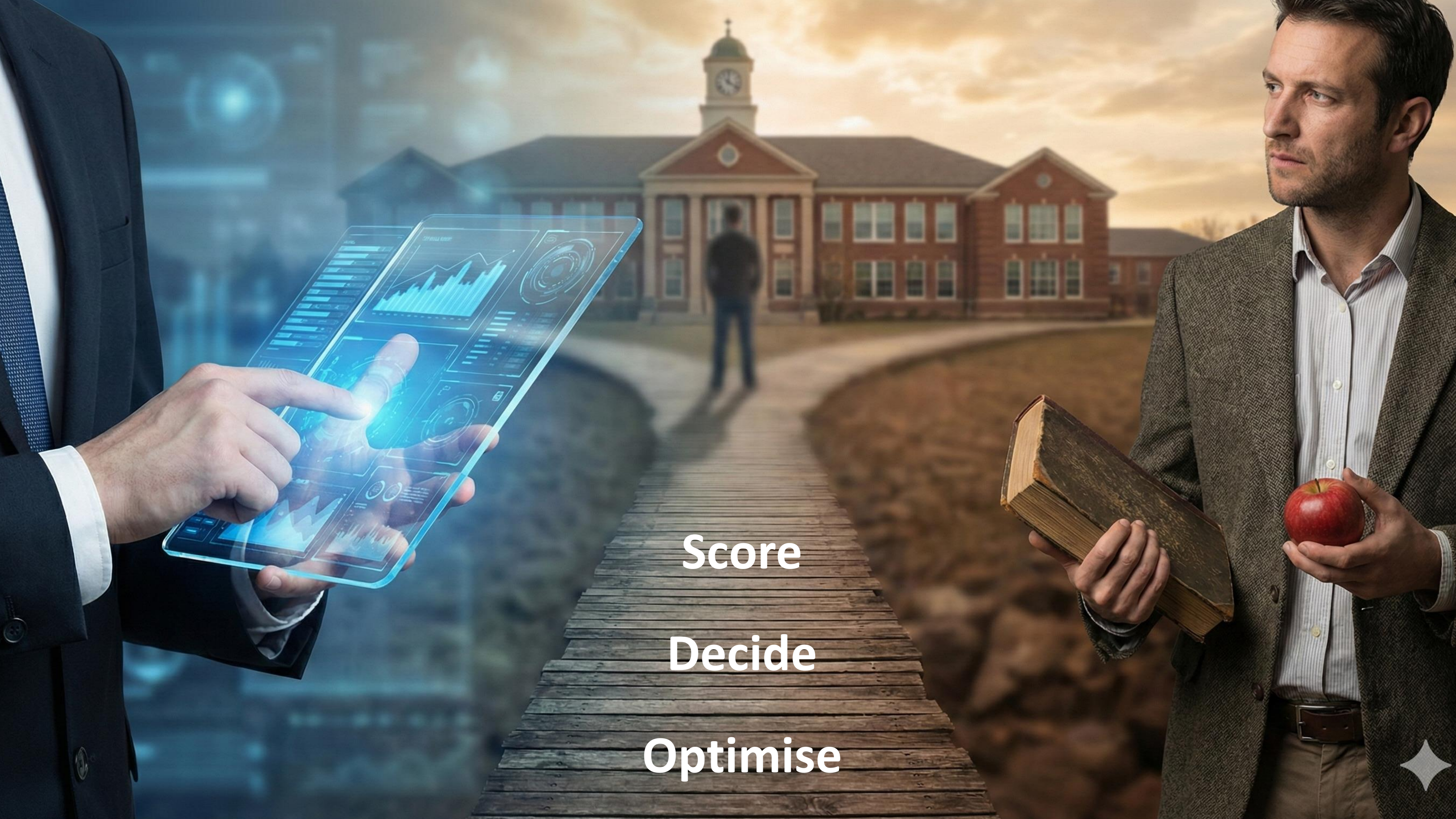
# A Different Cognitive Landscape

Children's brains  
aren't highways yet —  
they're trails still  
being carved.





The tool isn't the danger — the habit is



Score

Decide

Optimise



A diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are seated in a classroom or meeting. They are all smiling and raising their right hands, indicating active participation or agreement. The setting appears to be a modern educational or professional environment with bookshelves and papers visible in the background.

**You Are Already Living This**

**You know  
you are!**

# What is Quietly Shifting in Teachers

ownership of decisions



system recommendations



# pleasure in the Classroom



# But What Are We Training Students For?

Can they persist without prompts?

Can they reason without templates?

Can they judge quality independently?

Can they think without outsourcing?

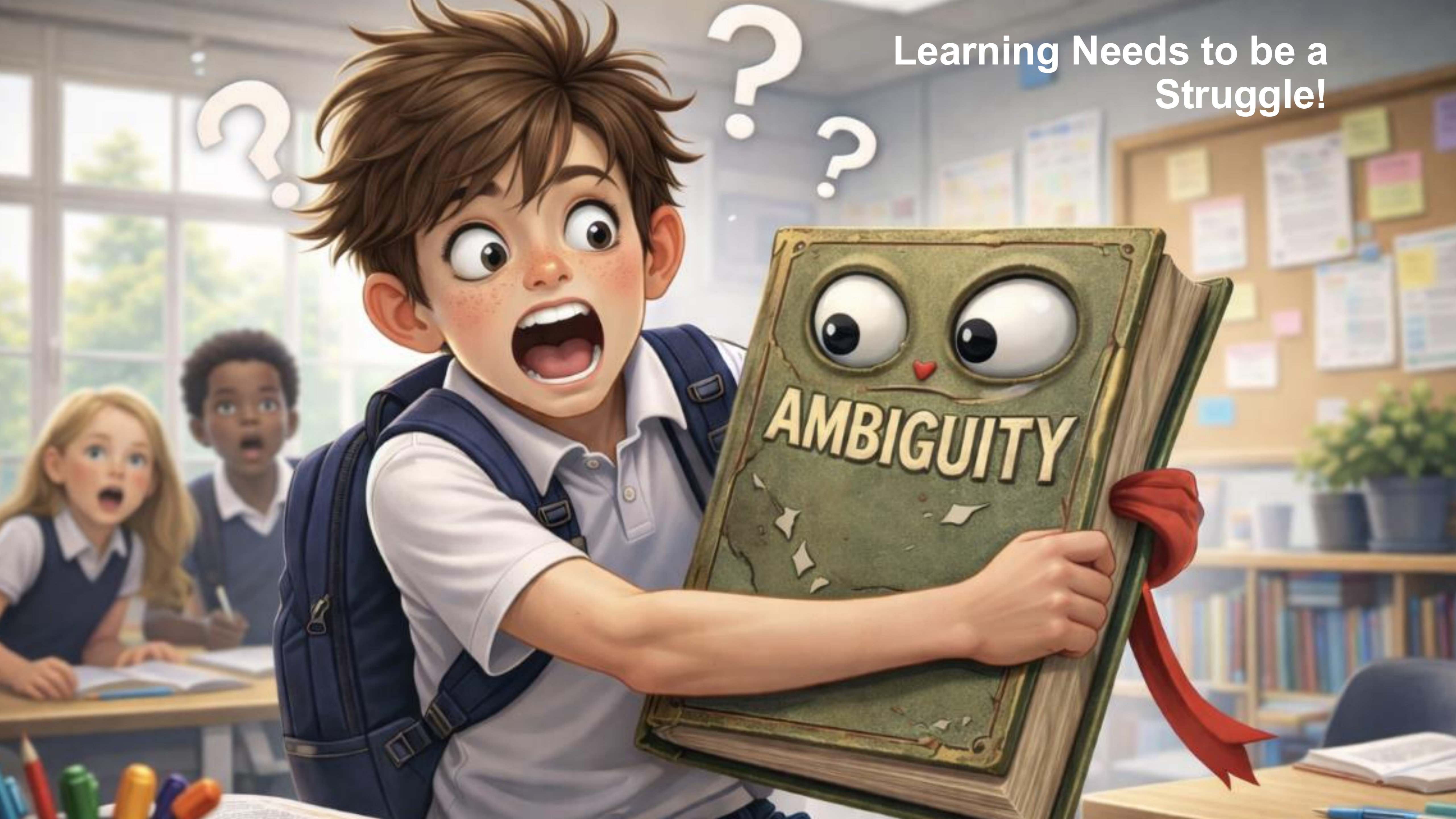


**Come back Brain  
Gym?!**

**All is forgiven**



Learning Needs to be a Struggle!





**pAIn**

**Is Where Learning  
Actually Happens**

**pAIn = productive difficulty**

**So here's the real question**

**Are we removing  
NECESSARY  
learning pain?**



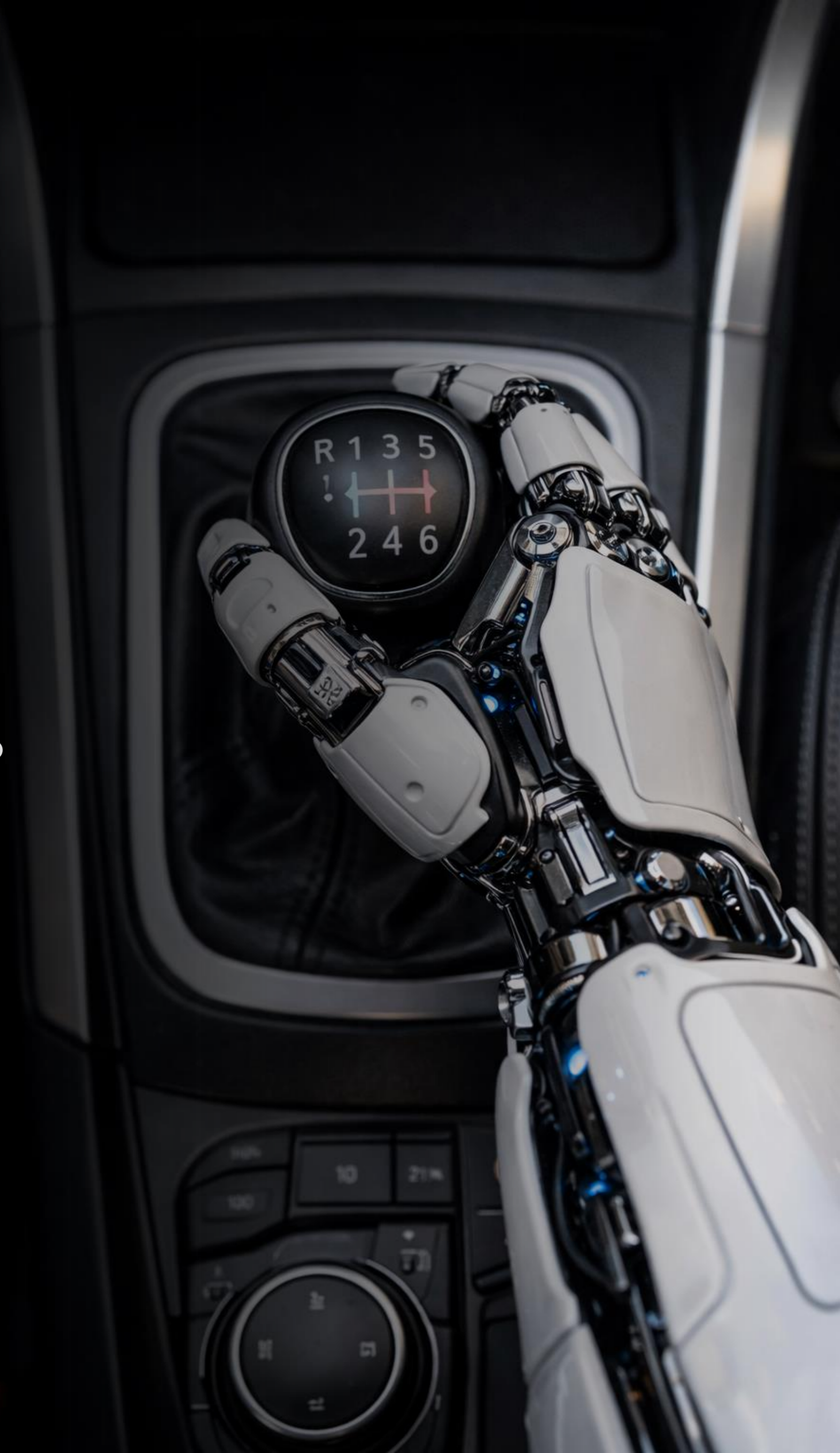
# Shift #1: Design for Struggle Again

Audit your lessons:

- Where is thinking genuinely hard?
- Where have we over-scaffolded?
- Where is retrieval uncomfortable?
- Where must students hold ideas in working memory?

Action ideas:

- Remove one scaffold per lesson
- Add one cold-thinking task per week
- Build silent struggle time intentionally



A woman with curly hair is sitting at a desk, writing in a notebook. She is wearing a light green cardigan over a white top. The desk is cluttered with stacks of papers, a red pen, and a pencil holder. The background is a plain wall.

# Shift #2: Protect Human Judgement

**Do not outsource:**

- **feedback tone and prioritisation**
- **task quality judgement**
- **misconception diagnosis**
- **pupil potential expectations**

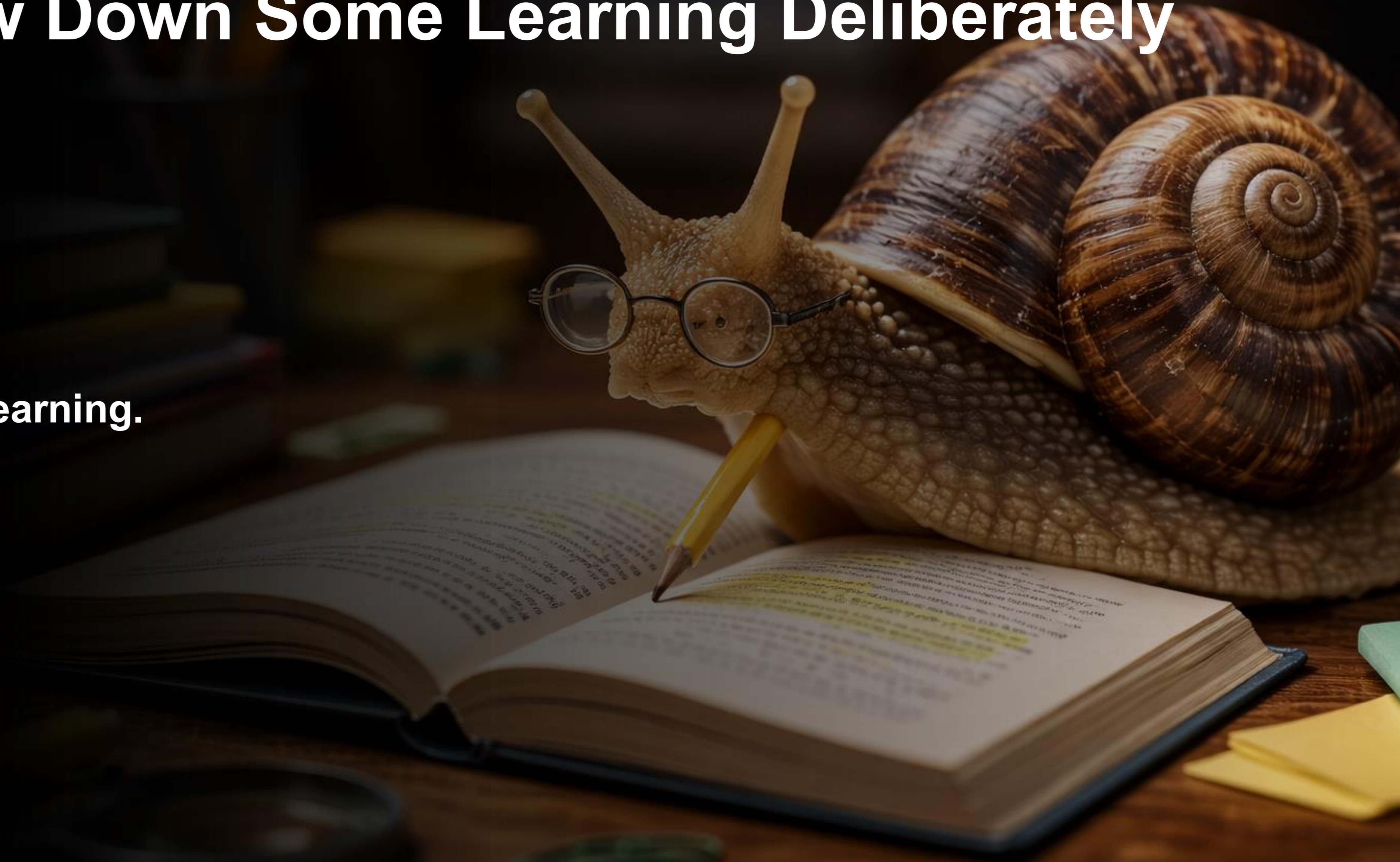
# Shift #3: Make Effort Visible Again MEVA

If students only see polished outputs, they learn avoidance.



# Shift #4: Slow Down Some Learning Deliberately

Speed hides shallow learning.



# Shift #5: Redesign Assessment in the AI Age

A young boy with a robot head is sitting at a desk in a classroom, writing in a notebook. The robot head is white with blue glowing eyes and a blue light on its forehead. The boy is wearing a blue plaid shirt and a white t-shirt. The background is a blurred classroom with other students at desks.

How do we assess

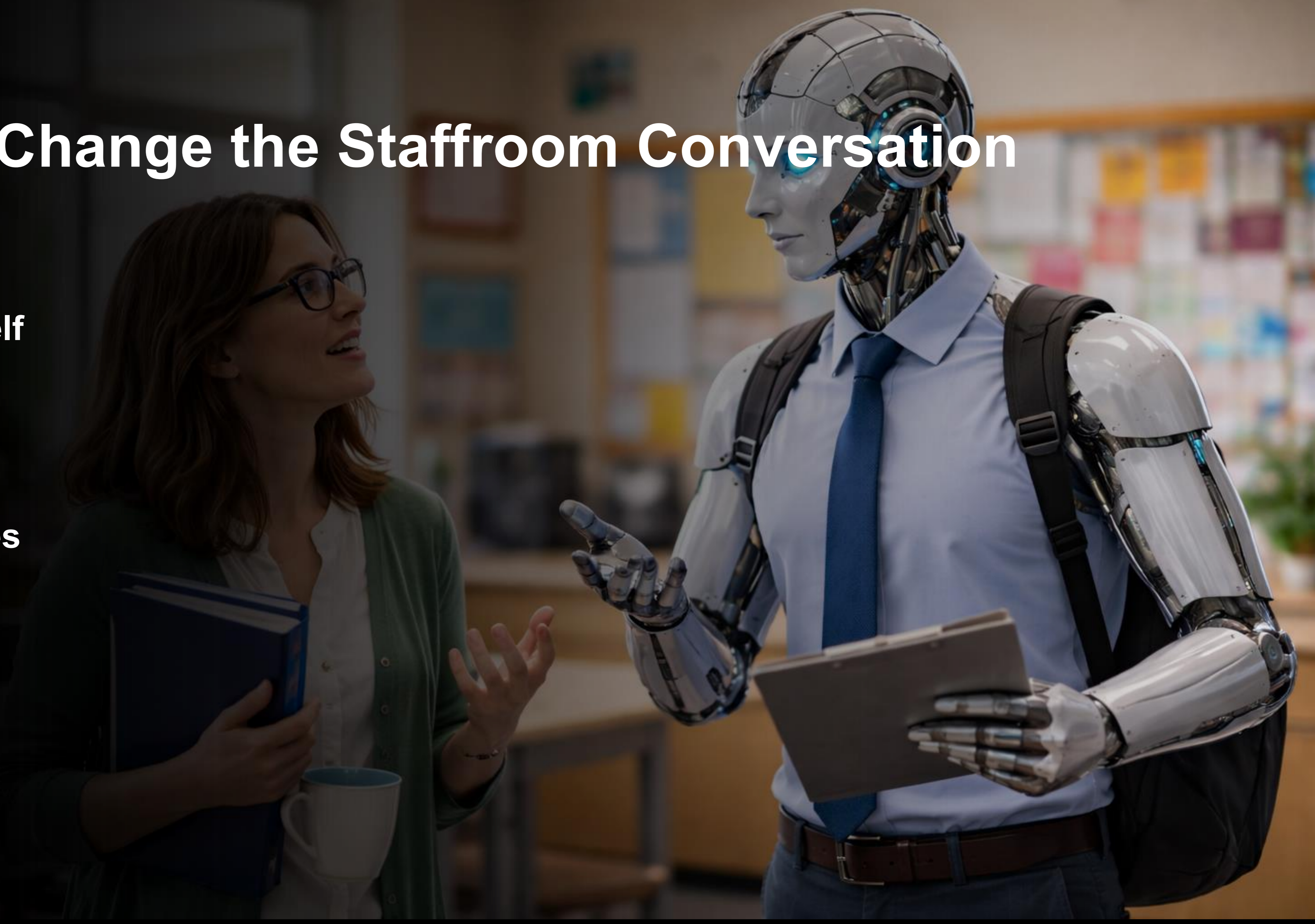
*process*

not just product?

# Shift #6: Change the Staffroom Conversation

Listen to yourself

Language shapes  
authority



# Leaders

**This Is a Design  
Responsibility**



# pLeisure

- comfort
- dependency
- compliance
- shallow performance

# pAIIn

- agency
- resilience
- judgement
- deep capability



# The Real Risk - for Teachers



# The Real Risk - for Students

Easy "Learning"



**What learning pAI will you intentionally protect this year?**



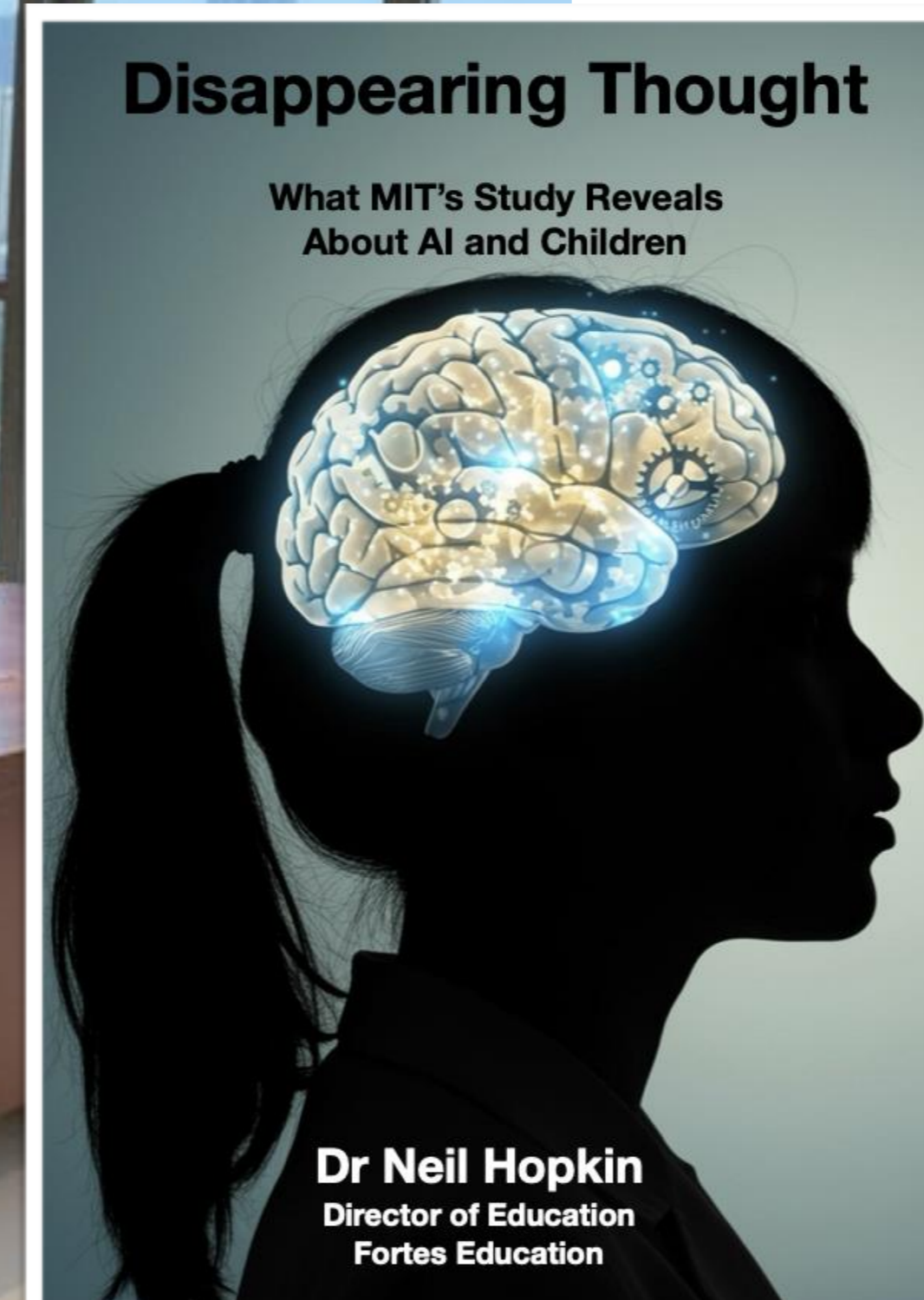
**What comfort will you courageously remove?**



**Download more of my  
research on AI at**

[www.TheCambridgeConsultancy.com/ai](http://www.TheCambridgeConsultancy.com/ai)

or scan here



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