

A chef in a white uniform and hat is plating a dish in a professional kitchen. The chef is using a pair of tongs to place a garnish on a plate. The background shows other chefs working in the kitchen.

Applied Co-Intelligence

The Future of CTE in the Age of AI

Cameron Sublett, Ph.D.

CTECS Community of Practice | Las Vegas, NV | September 2026

What is CTE?

Yesterday's vocational education

Today's career and technical education

***Plumber or Scientist?
Welder or Lawyer?***

The old binary

**14 Career Clusters
Cybersecurity to Health Sciences**

Today's CTE

The Dark History of Tracking

“Many educational scholars agree that an underlying function of vocational education has been to segregate poor and minority students into occupational training programs in order to preserve the academic curriculum for middle- and upper-class students.” – Jeannie Oakes, Keeping Track

“I went to college for one day and dropped out. That's all it took for me to realize my brain is in my hands.”

— My Dad





AI doesn't act on occupations. It acts on the tasks that compose them.

Substitute

AI performs the task

Secure

AI can't perform the task

Complement

AI supercharges it

Create

AI introduces new tasks

Labor Market Polarization



High-Skill

Employment ↑ Wages ↑

Middle-Skill

Employment ↓ Wages ↓

Low-Skill

Employment ↑ Wages ↓

The era of AI uncertainty.

— David Autor, MIT

LLMs → AI Agents → Robotics → Quantum

Could CTE's dark past become its dark future?

1

AI accelerates polarization

2

Programs overemphasize
technical skills

3

Uneven AI rollout
across CTE pathways

4

Uneven AI rollout
across districts

**Wind in
our sails.**



Mollick's Co-Intelligence

1

Always invite AI to the table

2

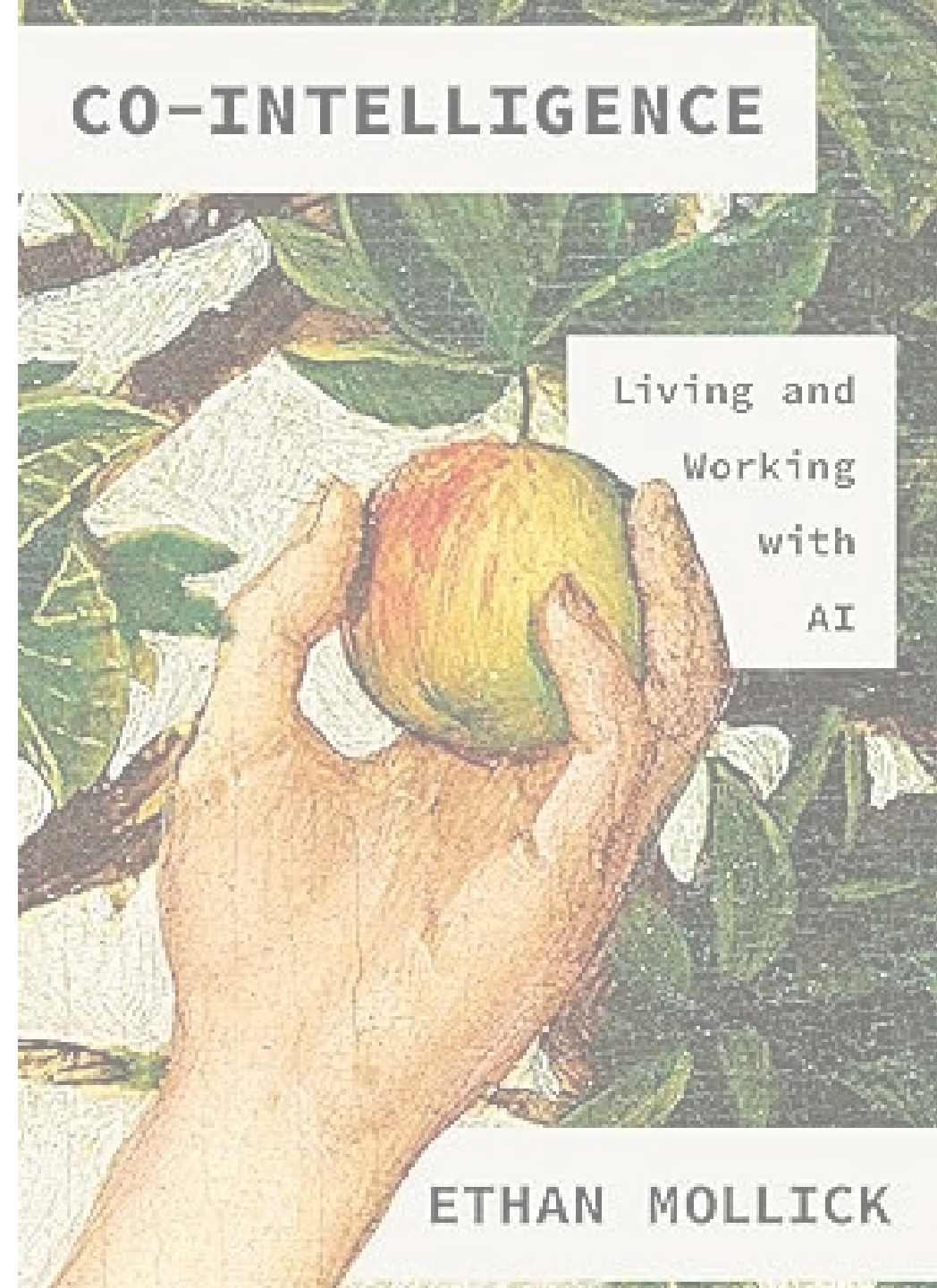
Be the human-in-the-loop

3

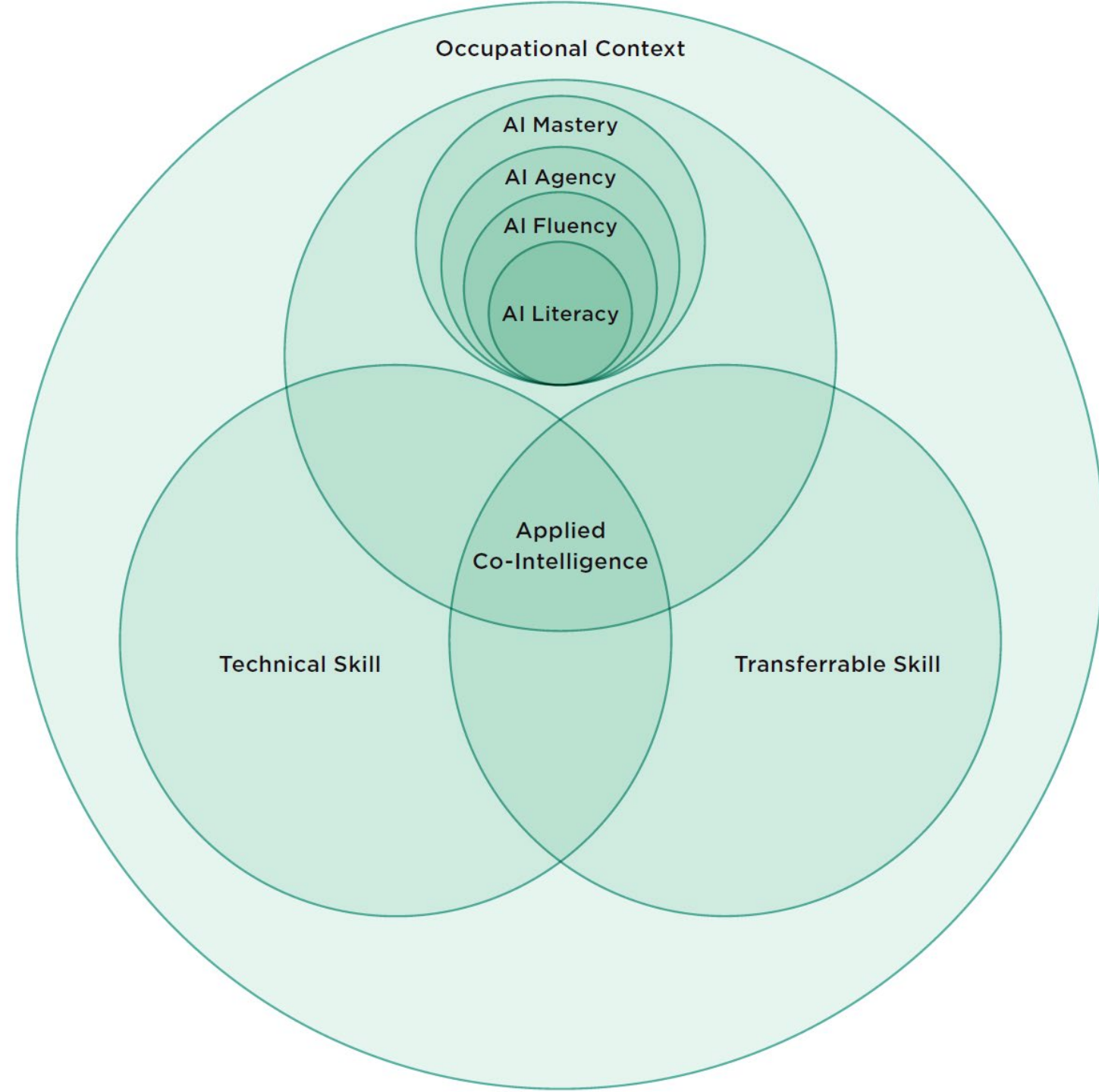
Treat it like a person

4

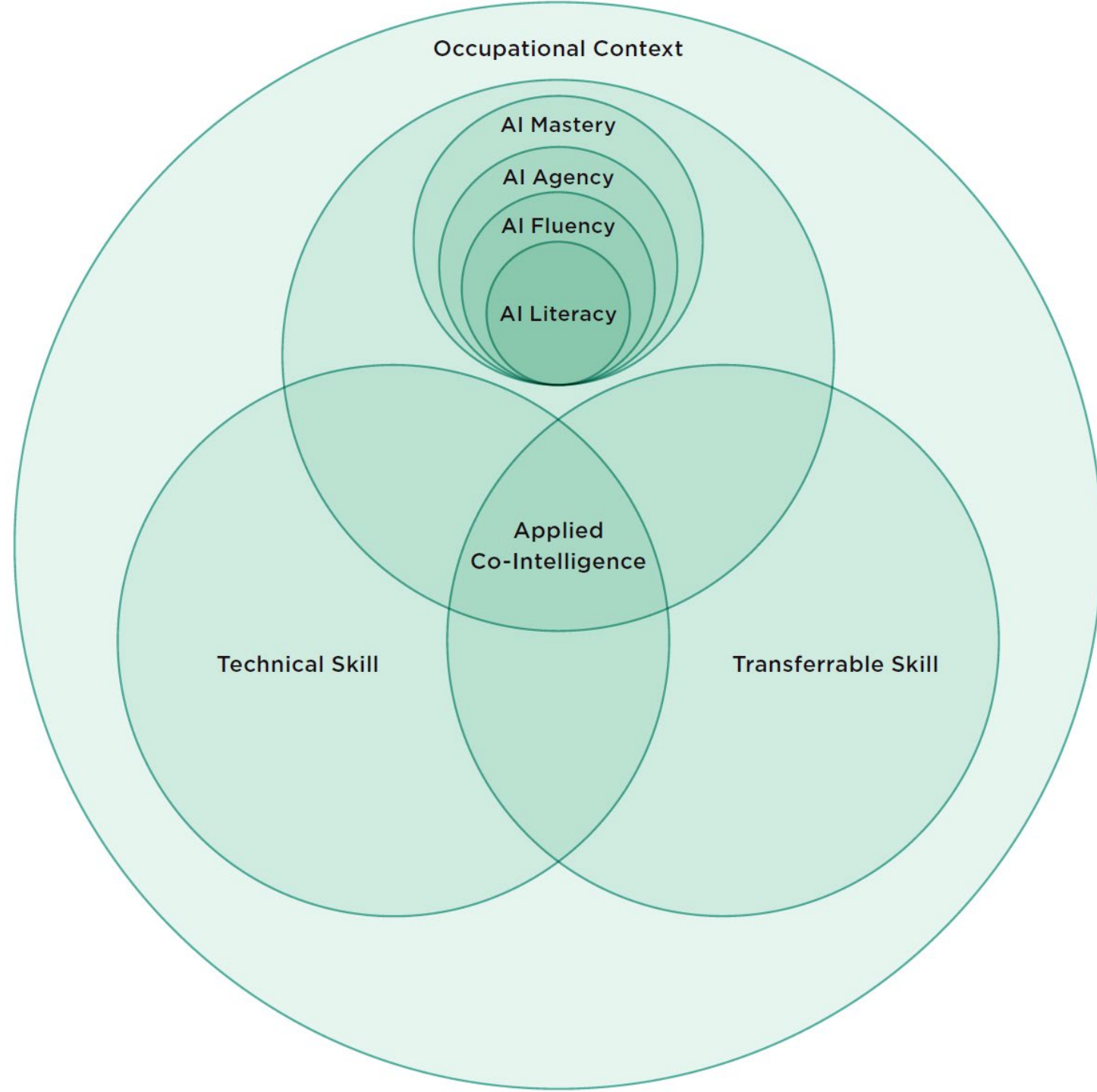
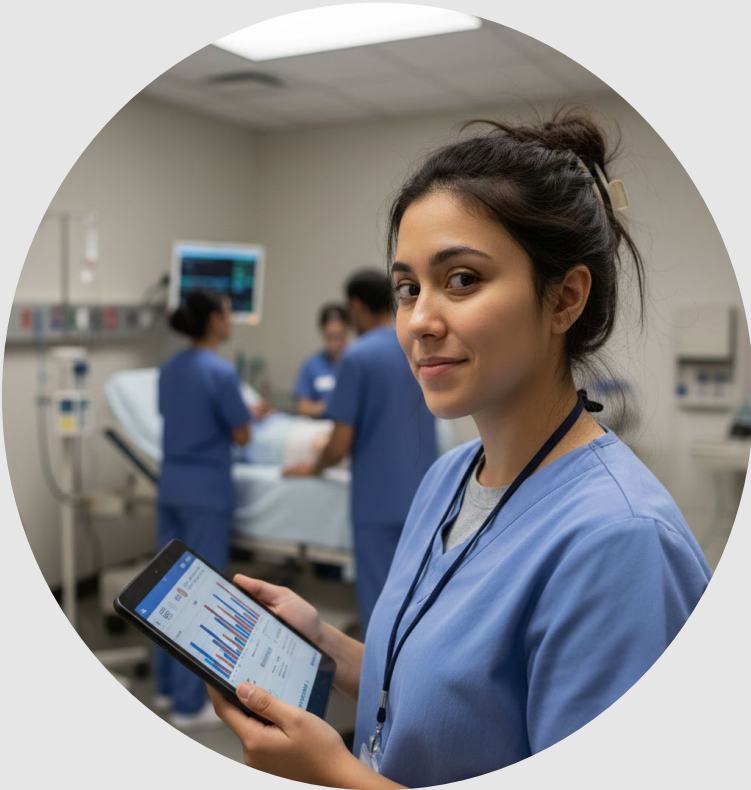
This is the worst AI you'll ever use



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The Barriers

Employers

Only 25% transparent
about hiring needs

CTE Providers

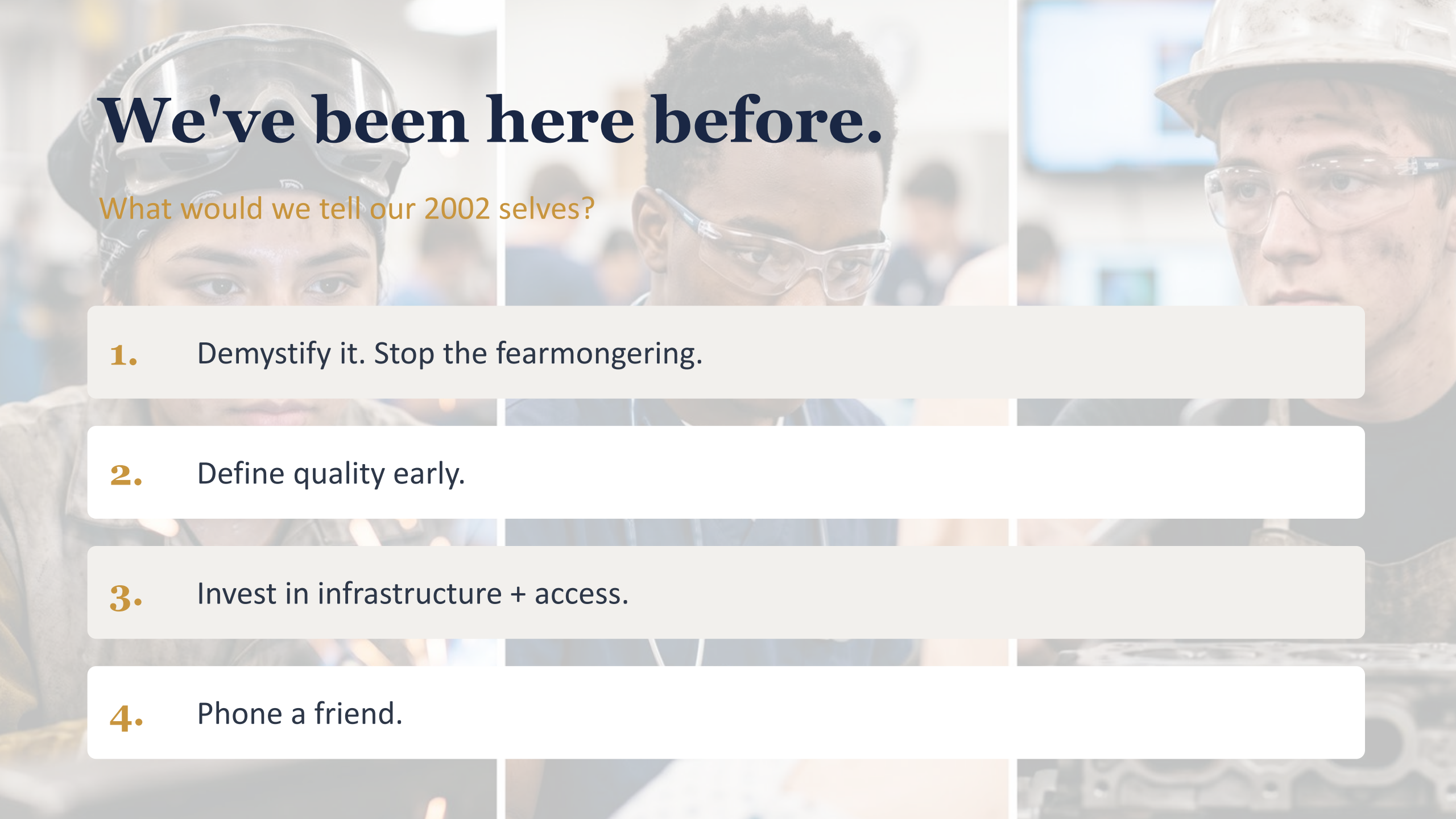
90%+ lack support,
guidance, and training

Students

57% using AI weekly.
53% say schools ban it.

Policymakers

No plan to
develop a plan.



We've been here before.

What would we tell our 2002 selves?

1. Demystify it. Stop the fearmongering.

2. Define quality early.

3. Invest in infrastructure + access.

4. Phone a friend.

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