

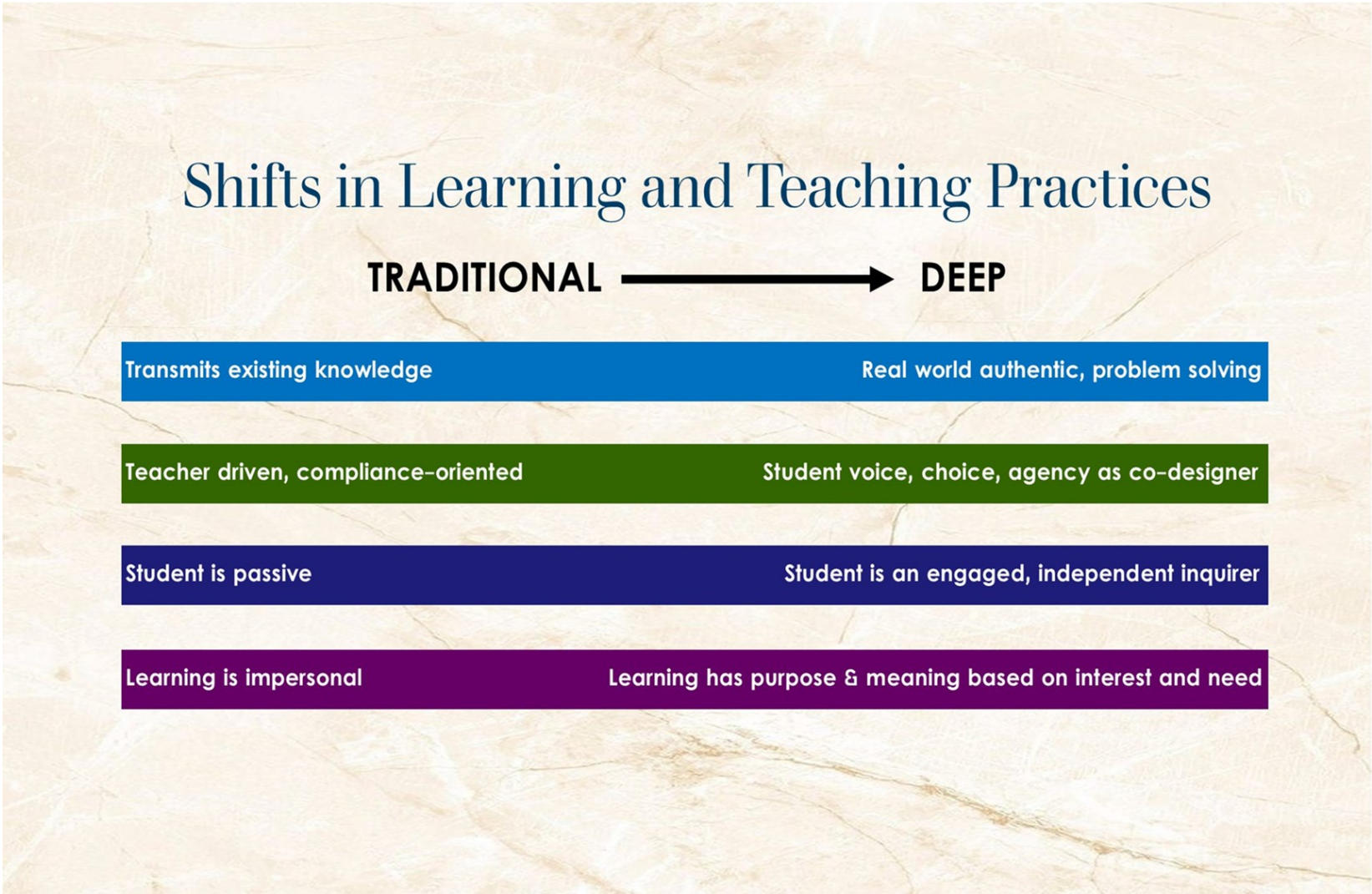
# SUPPORT FOR SHIFTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

The tools we use serve to determine to a large degree the way in which we think about things. In *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink traces the development of society in terms of the tools at use during different ages.

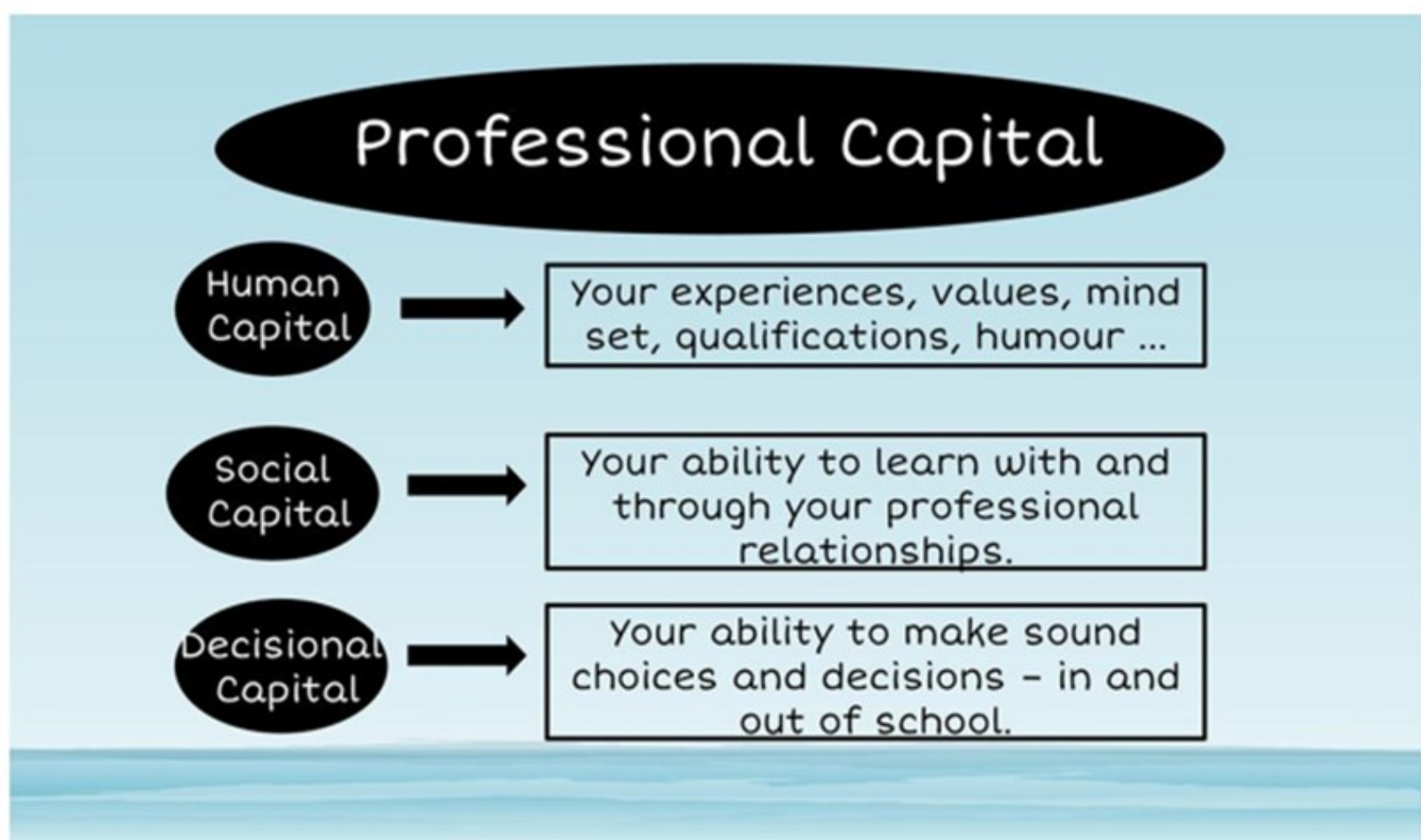
- Agriculture Age—Farmers
- Industrial Age—Factory Workers
- Information Age—Knowledge Workers
- Conceptual Age—Creators and Empathizers

Now think of these ages in terms of educational practices. During the Agriculture Age, few children attended school because they were needed on the farm. This changed during the Industrial Age with many parents and some children at work in factories. Formal schooling took on an added importance to prepare children for roles in society. Interestingly enough, schools were organized to model efficient assembly lines. As a result of technological advances during the Information Age, access to information exploded and many individuals became knowledge workers. Currently, the Conceptual Age dominates a number of workplaces. To make ever-expanding knowledge manageable, workers need to be able to think conceptually about information rather than processing it in a linear fashion.

Educational practices have been slower to adapt to the changing culture. In fact, the factory model still serves to define the organization of many of our classrooms. However, shifts in learning and teaching practices have begun to emerge over the past couple of decades that align with more conceptual thinking. Some of these changes have been noted in the chart below (adapted from Fullan and Quinn, World Education Summit, 2023).



So how do we support the transition to deeper learning and teaching practices? One of the goals is to develop a common language for both teachers and students that leads to maximum impact for learning. To use an analogy from business, if you want a return, you have to make an investment; and if you want to make an investment, you need to have capital to invest. In *Professional Capital* (2012), Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan define professional capital as the combination of human capital (knowledge and skills of individual educators), social capital (enhancing human capital through professional relationships), and decision capital (practice sharpened by human and social capital over time).



Professional Capital is being developed in Southwestern Union schools through the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). A PLC is a collaborative culture that is committed to continuous improvement and collective responsibility for teaching and learning, through active learning, modeling, and coaching. Initial data indicates that the process is having a significant impact on student learning. In addition, educators who have participated in PLCs are beginning to define learning as a “two-way street:” student learning depends on every teacher learning all the time! Thus, schools should be places where both adults and students learn. When educators learn, students learn more.