



Episode #126:

**Deb Douglas On Helping Gifted
Kids Become Self-Advocates**

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Deb: It finally occurred to me that we can't just tell our children they are gifted, they probably already know they're different from other kids, but we need to help them understand what that giftedness means, all the pros and cons. It needs to be a long conversation. And instead the message kids were getting, Oh, you're identified during a gifted program. Okay, that just simply means you're smarter than everybody else and you ought to be getting A's. That's not the message that we want to give.

Debbie: Welcome to Tilt Parenting, a podcast featuring interviews and conversations aimed at inspiring, informing, and supporting parents raising differently wired kids. I'm your host, Debbie Reber, and this week we are going to be talking about specifically how to help gifted kids become their own best self advocates. To talk about this with us, my guest is Deb Douglas. She's the founder of GT Carpe Diem and the author of the Gifted Kids Guide to Self Advocacy, which was published by Free Spirit Publishing. Deb has been an expert in student voice for over 16 years, advocating for gifted children in the upper midwest of the United States and beyond. She led her first GT Carpe Diem workshop in 2002 and her advocacy for gifted kids grew out of her own life experiences as a student, mother and teacher. Deb has a powerful approach to helping kids learn how to advocate for themselves as learners and she is going to break it all down for us in this episode. I hope you enjoy it and even if your child isn't identified as gifted, this is just a plain good old episode for how kids can learn to advocate for themselves and the benefits of self knowledge and self discovery. And as I mentioned in last week's introduction, I have gotten requests from parents to create Tilt groups in their communities based on the philosophy of TiLT Parenting and my book Differently Wired. Some of these groups are already happening and I really wanted to support these groups. I think there's tremendous value in gathering with other parents who truly get what we're experiencing so we can share resources and support and mentor each other and build friendships. So I put together a free Tilt Together Differently Wired Parent Group starter kit to provide group leaders with suggestions and strategies for running a group for parents of exceptional kids and their community.

So I've just put up a list of some Tilt Together Parent Groups by location that are getting started and you can find those on the website tiltparenting.com/together. And this way parents new to the differently wired journey can easily connect with each other. If you are running a group for parents raising differently wired kids and you'd like to be an official Tilt Together group or you just are interested in starting one in your community plays. Visit tiltparenting.com/together for details. I'm excited about the potential for these in-person communities and I look forward to hearing from you. And lastly, before I get to the episode, if you haven't had a chance to check out my new book Differently Wired and you want to see if it's for you, don't forget, you can download the first chapter and the table of contents at tiltparenting.com/book. And if you have read it already and liked what you read, I would be grateful if you would consider leaving a review on Amazon or Goodreads. Reviews means more visibility for the book and I want to make sure the people who would benefit from its message can easily find it. So thank you so much. Thanks to those of you who have already left reviews and if

you are so inclined to leave your own review, I would really appreciate it. Thank you so much. And now here is my conversation with Deb.

Debbie: Hey Deb, welcome to the podcast.

Deb: Hi. Thanks for having me. Happy to be here.

Debbie: I am happy to have you on. I'm looking forward to this conversation. When I initially reached out to you, I mentioned that we've had a conversation about how parents can be better advocates for their kids, but we haven't had this conversation about how kids themselves can advocate for themselves. So I'm looking forward to that. But before we get to the meat of our conversation, could you just take a few minutes to introduce yourself? Tell us about your work in the world and your connection to this subject matter.

Deb: Oh, gladly. I began my educational career quite a long time ago as a high school English and speech teacher and then I was a stay at home mom and then because of my background in language arts was asked to come back and do some pull out programming in the gifted program in the school district. We were in Wisconsin and I love doing junior grade books discussions with gifted elementary kids. It was so exciting, but I began to realize that the pullout program was very nice, but it wasn't really addressing all kids' needs and so I was trying to figure out what would be a better way of approaching gifted education. Went back to school to get a masters in curriculum and instruction for gifted children and during that time was hired as the full-time, first resource teacher and then gifted education coordinator in that same school district of about five thousand, six thousand students.

Deb: And then I spent about 20 years in that program coordinating that program and really built it into what I felt was a well organized research-based, continuous systematic way of providing for the needs of the gifted kids in the district, but there still seemed to be something kind of missing. And, and, um, I realized we needed to help focus on the social emotional needs of our kids as well. And as part of that, I began in my conversations with students saying, what is it that you need? What is it that you want, um, that will make school better for you? And most of the kids did not know how to answer. And I realized that I really hadn't allowed them to be partners in their education, that we had been doing gifted education to them and through their parents. But I really wanted to find a way for the students to really feel like they were taking the lead. And that's when I began focusing on self advocacy.

Debbie: And so what do you do today? You know, how does that actually show up in your work?

Deb: Well, I retired early from that position and I've been an educational consultant for the past 10 years now, primarily doing workshops for gifted students, what I call a one day jumpstart to self advocacy, a way for us to begin to help students focus on why they might want to self advocate and how they can do that successfully. Um, I also do professional development for teachers, teams of educators who can support the gifted students stuff, advocacy in their districts.

And I also, um, fortunately have been invited to speak at a lot of conferences both here in the US and most recently at the Echa conference in Dublin, Ireland, uh, last summer at the World Conference in Sydney, Australia. So I'm, I'm having wonderful experiences to meet people from around the world and share my passion for helping gifted kids speak out and craft their own route through school and through life.

Debbie: Yeah, that's fantastic. And, you know, I think self advocacy is just one of those things that's so important for kids to develop, you know, especially as we want them to launch successfully and be able to really understand their strengths and their weaknesses or lagging skills and then know how to get what they need and support themselves. So can you kind of walk us through, I guess, you know, I want to talk about why it's so important for gifted kids to have these skills, but you know, at what age is it even something that is a skill that they can begin developing or that you start working with kids?

Deb: Well, my workshops are intended for kids in transition from, for instance, in the states or from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school, but I believe that we as parents and as educators should be helping gifted kids, recognize their needs and learn to ask for what they need as early as possible. Here in the United States, especially elementary schools may be quite good at providing for the needs of gifted kids. And especially if they're in a classroom where the teacher knows them well and knows how to differentiate work, but by middle school frequently kids are more heterogeneous settings and teachers have a whole lot more, um, individual students they're responsible for and they may not know the students as well as an elementary teacher who has them all day, all year. Plus by the time our kids are approaching adolescence, they are less likely to want us as parents stepping in and advocating for them. So I think it's a lifetime. Self advocacy is a lifetime skill that can benefit everybody. All students, all human beings. But it's especially important for kids who are outliers and our gifted kids are definitely outliers. Our twice exceptional kids are probably two or three times outliers and kids from underrepresented populations of gifted students are as well. Kids in rural areas or in urban areas or kids who are underground come, come from poverty or come from families in which there is not a lot of support or understanding or access to the educational system. And so more and more as we help our kids recognize that it's, they are outliers. It's okay to be outliers, that's who they are, but that might mean they need something different than the general mass of age level or grade levels kids around them.

Debbie: So talk more then about why it's so critical for gifted kids to develop these skills. What, what are they risking if they don't?

Deb: Well, especially if we're talking about gifted kids, getting an appropriately challenging education. If everything always comes easily and if kids are primarily extrinsically motivated by the good grades and high test scores and praise and parents and teachers, they don't realize that education can be exciting and challenging on its own and unfortunately for some gifted kids, the grade becomes the goal or the praise becomes the goal and therefore they will underachieve to assure that they can get good grades, can get that 100 percent correct rather than taking a risk and doing something that's challenging that will stretch them.

And sometimes for gifted kids, they failed to develop those study and executive functioning skills that they need in order to be successful at more challenging things, simply because they haven't needed to use those. And for some students that winds up, they don't ever reach that wall that they can't pass until maybe they're even in college and they struggle there and of course I won't go into detail on it, but we know there are things like imposter syndrome that many brilliant people have in which they believe that they are an imposter because they've never had to work hard at whatever they are successful at and that someday somebody's going to walk up and call them on it. Even even people like famous author Neil Gaiman have expressed concerns about that. So I'm not trying to say that the gifted people are neurotic or have all sorts of emotional problems, but I do believe they live more satisfying lives and more self-actuated lives if they understand their abilities and accept challenges that are appropriate for them.

Debbie: And I'm just curious, and I don't know if this is a focus of your work, but just even in terms of identifying these kids in the classroom, how does that usually happen in the way you see it? Is it usually a parent who flags a child and pushes for that child to be tested, or is it typically teachers who recognize just to be clear, giftedness isn't, um, we're not talking about kids who are necessarily just high performing or accelerated learners, but it's really a way of thinking. Right? And processing information. So how, how is that identified typically?

Deb: That's an excellent question and it can't be met by a single answer. I can speak primarily about what I've learned about the educational system here in the United States, but as I said, I've been talking to people around the world this last two years and it's repeated in many places around the world. We are not good at identifying gifted learners and the amount of effort and energy put into identifying and programming for gifted learners varies based on what the laws are, what the statutes are, what funding is available, what training is available for teachers, and what information is given to parents. And it varies so much that it's hard to say one steadfast rule. Ideally gifted kids would be identified by their school district. Most often that is based on either achievement test scores or ability test scores, IQ test scores is the first indicator. By basing our identification of gifted kids primarily on those two types of test scores, we miss a whole lot of kids who either don't test well or don't do well on those kinds of tests or aren't even considered for testing in those areas. And we could spend the whole program on identification for that, but I think one of the best ways to help our students self-identify is to help them understand their own learner profile, to reflect on the ways in which they are similar, but then the ways they're different from the learners around them. And then also to help them reflect on, are your needs being met? Do you feel challenged? Are you exploring things that you're interested in? Um, do you have time to spend with other children who are smart or maybe smarter than you, that challenge your thinking and do have the people around you who understand you and can support your learning needs? And quite honestly, that boils down to the four steps to self-advocacy for gifted kids. We can go back and talk about that. We haven't really mentioned the definition of self-advocacy.

Debbie: Yeah, let's do that.

Deb: Yeah. The one that I use most frequently is something I actually stole from the world of special education. It was originally defined by Loring Brinckerhoff when the IDEA laws were being created here in the United States and he defined self advocacy as the process of recognizing and meeting the needs specific to one's learning ability and then I love the second phrase without compromising the dignity of oneself or others.

Debbie: Yeah, that's great.

Deb: Yeah. It's not just saying, this is what I want. This is what I need. I want, I want give me, give me. It's saying I have this particular learning need that I think could be addressed in this way and learning how to do it so that the individual, him or herself, doesn't feel like they're being, that their dignity is being compromised or they also, they are not compromising the dignity of other students or their teachers or their parents. One of my students once said to me, when we were talking about this in the workshop and she said, I know exactly what you mean. I was sitting in Algebra class and I was so upset about doing all the large number of problems when I could get them done in a hurry, but I didn't even need to do them. I, I, I did one problem when I understood the concept and she's said I just got mad and I got up out of my seat with everyone else working at their desk and went back to my teacher and I said, this is just plain boring. I hate this. I've got to do something different. Well, he got upset with her. She saw the other kids turn their heads around and she realized suddenly that her anger and her attitude and her saying that this was easy compromised the dignity of the other kids in the class.

The teacher sent an email home to her parents and they were not ready to be told by a teacher that their child was doing something wrong. So their dignity was compromised. They call the principal. The principal's dignity was compromised because he thought that they were complaining about his teachers and he knew he needed to defend his staff and as Wendy said to me, it turns out everybody's dignity was compromised and the worst thing is I didn't get what I wanted and needed. So I think that's a great example. If kids are taught how to ask for what they want and also to share with those people who they must ask why it is they wanted and why it is better, not just for them but in general why it's a better way of approaching things. They are much more apt to get what they need and what they want.

Debbie: It makes so much sense and seems like such an easy thing to do, but just how that one incident negatively impacted so many people. So it's such an important thing to learn and I have several questions but I would like actually to talk about your, your steps because I want to know how this can be done. Because just even to address the, the G word, you know that that is something that there's so much stigma around. And I know that there are probably parents listening to this who are uncomfortable even with that term, or should I let my child know that they're gifted? What does that mean for them? Will they become someone who thinks too highly of themselves? Like, I just think it's a very complicated issue. So I'd

love to know how we can teach our kids these self advocacy skills in a way that, that can feel really good and maybe even address some of those concerns parents might have.

Deb:

Okay. I'm happy to speak about those. Um, what I've discovered, and before I actually came up with my workshop, I was trying to help my students self advocate throughout the school year and I realized that they did not have the information they needed. They didn't have the insights about themselves or about the system and they didn't have the tools they needed in order to do it successfully. This is boring. I hate this, didn't we do this last year? Doesn't go very far in creating change. And so it occurred to me as I processed all of this that number one in order to feel that they could self advocate, my students needed to know they had a right to self advocate, but also that they had some responsibilities that it was not just asking for everybody to do something for them and we need to think in terms of what those rights and responsibilities were. And one of the rights comes directly out of the eight great gripes of gifted kids that was collected from surveys by Jim Delisle and Judy Galbraith years and years ago. And the first great gripe was nobody tells us what gifted is all about. And I realized that even in my own practice and even in my own role as mother of gifted children, I kept pretty quiet about it for just the reasons you said. If I tell my kids are gifted, are they going to expect something? Are they going to think they're better than other people? Are they going to be an elitist about themselves? Is it going to hurt them? And it finally occurred to me that we can't just tell our children they are gifted, they probably already know there are different from other kids. But we need to help them understand what that giftedness means, all the pros and cons. It needs to be a long conversation. And instead the message kids were getting, Oh, you're identified during a gifted program, okay, that just simply means you're smarter than everybody else and you ought to be getting a's. That's not the message that we want to give. So in working with my gifted kids, I helped them look at several different definitions of giftedness. So that had been around for a long, long time. Compare, contrast, weigh all the different parts and also to help them recognize that we as adults, we as an educational community have never settled on one good definition of giftedness. And yet yet we know that kids with high intellectual academic ability need something different. And I show the kids the bell curve, not because I want them to post their IQ on there, but to help them understand that not only an intellectual ability, but in so many other characteristics that gifted kids have, they wind up somewhere on that bell curve and the reason it's especially important for kids to self advocate in an educational system is because the vast majority of what's going on in the classroom on a daily basis of necessity falls in the middle of that bell curve.

Teachers, instruction, curriculum, aim at that large group and any time kids are outliers on either side of that bell curve, they need something different. We also talk about their responsibilities. Not just their right for something different, but the responsibility and of course being bored is no excuse for doing poor homework and gifted kids need to develop the attributes of good character that we expect all students to develop. Things like turning in your work on time and working well in groups and you know that whole list of things that we need to

become in order to work well in a society. So the rights, the responsibilities and giftedness means is the first step of becoming able to self advocate. Now, depending upon where the students are, the rights might include the laws that are in place or the funding that's in place or even looking at the mission statement of their school or their school district, which almost always includes this phrase, something about we're here to help all children succeed or all children be challenged and gifted kids see themselves in that all, even though they are maybe very different from other children. I also like Jim Delisle's phrase that being gifted means you are better at something than another person, but not necessarily does that mean you're better than that person? Better at not better than.

Debbie: Right. Before you move on, I'm going to ask this question because it crept up in my mind and I have a feeling my listeners are going to want to know the answer as well and that is what is your stance or opinion on sharing an actual IQ number with a child?

Deb: It certainly depends upon the family and the child and I know people who have decided to share that and people who decided not to share that. Um, I think if we share that with a child as a part of the bigger picture, not simply that this is you and you're gifted because your IQ is 155 or 165 or whatever, but to say you want the full information about yourself. Here it is. I think we as parents need to decide if that information is useful for our child and if it is when it's useful for their child. But again, it's got to be part of this whole picture and that kind of leads in quite honestly to the, the second step of helping our kids understand themselves and moving toward self advocacy and that is recognizing and reflecting on their learner profile. Before we do though, I want to go back to one other question you had and that's using the word gifted. There are so many euphemisms today for gifted. I use the term simply because that is a term that the research has used while way back. So we're talking about 70, 80 years. We have used the term gifted, so it's a great term. There's nothing wrong with it. Here in Wisconsin, a lot of people have decided they're going to call them able learners.

Debbie: I haven't heard that before.

Deb: Or advanced learners. Neither one of those, however, describes all gifted kids. Not all kids are advanced learners or necessarily even able learners, depending upon the context. And I also think that many of our euphemisms leave out what we know about gifted children in general. The overexcitabilities, the intensities, the creativeness. I mean, just gifted individuals are so complicated that by just saying that there are high achievers or whatever does them an injustice. So when I work with the kids, I say I'm going to use the term gifted and they may use lots of different terms in your school are not talk about it at all, but I've got really good reasons for just going ahead and using the g word. And once again, if your listeners have never read the poem, The G Word again by Jim Delisle, you'll find it online and it's almost Dr. Seuss like, but it, it really is a good explanation of why many of us just go ahead and use the word rather than stumble around with it.

Debbie: Yeah. Great. Thank you for sharing that.

Deb: So the second step that I worked with kids on and self advocacy as I said is, is assessing and reflecting on their own individual learner profile. And I used the five areas of the learner profile that Karen Rogers described in her book, *Re-Forming Gifted Education: Matching the Program to the Child*. Um, I know you can find copies of it online. It's an older book. I believe it was first published in 1992. But the five areas that Karen says we need to look at, help us understand the bigger picture of a gifted learner. She says, of course number one, we do look at intellectual ability and whether that's an IQ number or whether that's an assessment like in the. When I keep throwing all these things up. Are you familiar with the Renzulli scales? Joe Renzulli, years ago came up with the rating scales for the behavioral characteristics of gifted children. It's shortened term as the SRBSS, and, and again you can find this online, but he had I believe, 12 different assessment tools for educators, for parents, for whomever to look at it and say, here's some characteristics. How do you rate your child in these characteristics? And many of the characteristics of the intellectual ability rating scale are things like learns quickly, has a great memory, keen observer, visualizes, and I've come up with them off the top of my head, but that's, I think a far better way to help our kids assessed their intellectual ability. How many of these things are true about you in relationship to what you know about yourself in relationship to the people around you? And to break down IQ or intellectual ability into specific characteristics, I think is very helpful.

Debbie: Very cool. I'm going to check that out.

Deb: Okay, good. Um, he also has rating scales for creativity and leadership and uh, and uh, artistic ability and specific academic abilities. So again, um, do check them out and the characteristics that are help us determine a child's strength than any of those areas. And maybe the greatest strengths in some areas, and that's the second part of the learner profile. What are the specific learning strengths of this gifted child? Not all gifted kids have great learning strengths in math or language arts or languages or whatever. So what are the areas in which this child specifically has strengths. For some gifted individuals that may be all of them. And then it's really helpful to look at the third part of a learner profile, so where are your interests, maybe you have strength in all these areas, but what are you really interested in and and to help kids assess, are you interested in this because all kids your age like this, are you interested in this because it's a family interest and you do it together and love this family time? Or is this something that you are just uniquely passionate about and maybe you don't know anyone else who has this passion? What do you really care about? Then we also ask them to assess the fourth part, which is their learning preferences. How do you like to learn? What kind of strategies work best for you in a classroom? When you really have to concentrate and study, what kind of an atmosphere around you is most successful? And how do you prefer to show what you've known. Would you really rather write essays or would you really rather do short answers or quick assessments of things? Would you rather draw a schematic about something and for kids to begin to recognize that there is no right or wrong way there. There are some ways you're going to have to show what you know, you know, in university

classes and that sort of thing, but if given a choice, what is the best way for you to demonstrate your understanding of something? So those are the learning preferences. And then the fifth category is personality characteristics, and then when I'm working with gifted kids, I really like to focus on some of the personality characteristics that are typical of some or all gifted kids.

Deb: So we talk about optimism and pessimism. We talk about introversion and extroversion. Knowing that according to Linda Silberman, maybe as much as two thirds of the general population is extroverted, but two thirds of the gifted population is introverted. So what bearing does that have on a gifted child's needs in the educational system? We also talk about overexcitabilities and I can't tell you how many heads start nodding when we talk about things like, you know, does that seam in your sock bother you? And kids will say things like, you know, I never thought about it but doesn't, doesn't that buzzing light above us bother all of you. And some kids will go what buzzing light? So those sensory emotional psychomotor overexcited abilities that may impact students' educational setting they need to be aware of and they also feel like normalized. One of the fun things about having get the kids together in my workshops is they may not know each other, but they leave feeling they had the great peer group because I've networked with kids who who they understand who understand them and they have more similarities with than many of the kids in the regular classrooms.

Debbie: Well I love all five of those and I can see so much value even in having that level of self awareness or even just considering those questions as a kid is so wonderful. I'm such a fan of self discovery. I think it's one of the greatest gifts we can give our kids. So this is such a nice, you know, for, for parents of any kids really. This is such a nice thing to help our kids kind of reflect on.

Deb: I would agree. And I think the trend in some places right now towards personalized learning allows teachers to help students reflect on their learner profiles in that way. And I agree it's valuable for all of us. In fact, when I and other adults are in the workshop, we're always discovering new things about ourselves, the new awarenesses. The interesting thing for us as parents however, is I know that at times I tended to think that my sons had the same kind of learning profile that I did and I was suddenly amazed one day. I was helping my older son learn German vocabulary and I was coming up with my own mnemonic and suddenly he turned to me and he said, mom, you're a visual learner and I'm an auditory learner. I can't use your method. Good for you, good for you. So it's fun for us as parents to assess our own learner profiles when our kids are doing it and compare and contrast and to celebrate the differences as well as the ways in which we have some familial similarities.

Debbie: Yes, absolutely. Alright. Give us step three.

Deb: Step three is knowing what options are available, what opportunities, either that already exists within the educational community around us, and I'd say community because it may be a school district, it may be a homeschooling group. It may be an individual at home, parent child educational situation, but what options and opportunities are out there? And the exciting thing about the last

five to 10 years is there a more and more opportunities available or online resources, more college courses online, more charter schools, especially public charter school that are free of charge to kids, and more opportunities for homeschool kids to homeschool part time and be in public schools at times. There is a book edited by Felicia Dixon and it's available from the National Association for Gifted Children. It's called Programs and Services for Gifted Secondary Students and the reason I especially like it, even though it's for secondary students, it gives elementary and middle school students a chance to look ahead at what might be available down the road and help them to plan what they might do in the future, but it also gives them an idea of things that they may be ready for accelerated opportunities that they might be ready for at a younger age. And I recommend the book for all the options and opportunities that they mention. I also hope that students look beyond the formal educational system to recognize opportunities in their community for coursework outside, maybe coursework at colleges and universities for younger students, and to consider a variety of options actually that might include extracurricular activities, clubs, and organizations that would allow them to explore interests or to network with other students maybe at different age levels who have the same passion they do. So find out about options and opportunities and then most importantly, to match them to the student profile and to think in terms of is this an option you can be successful at? And just to give you a brief story, I realized after reading Karen Rogers' book, because Re-forming Gifted Education's subtitle is Matching the Program to the Child. That at times in my life as an educator, I had created an option for a student that might not have been right for them. For instance, Micah, um, was really struggling with math, not because he couldn't do math, but because he didn't have support from home. He didn't have a quiet place to study. Um, he came from a very disadvantaged family that, that really didn't know how to help him access the community and I knew he could go faster and math, so I put them on a computerized self paced math program in a small little office next to the math department head where he could get help and support anytime he needed it. And within the first week, instead of doing two years of math, Micah had taken the computer apart, which is fascinating had he actually put back together, but that, that wasn't what he needed at that point. He, because of his background, needed a mentor who could help him find ways to be successful at math, be successful at his school, work despite some of the disadvantages he was facing.

Deb: So I think it's so important for us as parents and educators and especially for students who have reflected on their learner profile to say, yeah, this is an option I like and this is also an option I could be successful at. So that's step number three. And that leads us right into step number four, which is connecting with advocates who can support the students plan because we know that students on their own, especially as they begin to self advocate, really need adults and maybe sometimes other students around them who can help them on their path. And learning how to approach them appropriately, how to ask appropriately make the big, big difference. I once had a student say to the principal, I just want to change this class to the afternoon. And then came back to me and said, I wasn't very successful. Principal said, what if I changed everyone's classes? And I said, well, did you tell him why you wanted to change your class to the afternoon? And

she said, no. I said, lay out the whole thing for the principal. So she went back to him and she said, I'm not much of a morning person. And just getting up and getting to school on time is a struggle for me. But I do it. But I'd like to have gym first thing in the morning and I'd like to have my math class in the afternoon when my brain's really awake and alert and I can really do well on a subject that I adore...math. What would that explanation? A reason behind what she wanted? The principal said, Oh yeah, okay, we can do that. That's not a problem. So, so often for our students, the understanding of themselves and what their needs are and to be able to articulate it clearly to a supportive adult means the difference between a plan that succeeds and a plan that fails.

Debbie: That makes so much sense. I mean, I imagine there's a lot of trial and error, right? It's not that the kids are gonna like get these skills right away and then boom, they're great advocates. Like they're probably gonna have a lot of experiences that don't go so well, but those are where the learning happens, I imagine.

Deb: Perfectly said. Debbie, thank you. That's exactly it. And our support, whether we're educators or parents or grandparents or friends around them is what helps them get through those non successful attempts. Rethink them. And decide, okay, is this something I still want to pursue or am I okay leaving this one aside and I will have a new goal. In the workshop by the afternoon, the students each have selected a goal of something that they would like to change, either a short term goal of changing something immediate now or for next year or a longterm goal, but a specific goal. And then they create an action plan around that goal. I've discovered that most of their goals fall into kind of four categories. Many of the kids wanted a more appropriate challenge in one area or another. Some students want to explore an interest that isn't currently in front of them.

Maybe it's something that's not offered in their school or they just don't have the opportunity or the means of exploring it. Thirdly, some students want more time with other kids like themselves in in us public schools, most of our gifted kids are not in gifted schools or gifted classrooms or even gifted cluster groups. The vast majority in public education are still in heterogeneous classrooms and one of the biggest complaints I hear from gifted kids is that working in groups is so difficult when they're always expected to carry the heavy load or be the leader or be the instructor and so many times they say, I just want to be with somebody who likes this as much as I do, as passionate or maybe challenges my thinking a little. And then the fourth area is some of them wanted change either home or school to adapt them to their personal characteristics we're talking about. It might be as simple as that girl saying to the teacher, this light above me is buzzing and it really bothers me. Can I just change my desk to the other side of the room? Or something as simple as the young woman who was a night owl changing her class schedule to better accommodate her sleep cycle or or somebody setting up a quiet study place in their home or putting together a group with a school counselor on perfectionism and those kinds of things. A lot of the kids decide that that's the first thing they want to tackle, not an academic challenge.

Debbie: Hmm. Makes Sense. Especially these kids know themselves so well. Being able to then articulate it must be super empowering and to be able to realize, oh, I can

actually affect my environment and so many of them are so sensitive, so I could see the power in that .

well and I liked the fact that they leave the workshop, as I said, with a plan, a real simple action plan, but simply, what are the steps that I have to carry out in order to achieve my goal and then who's going to take these steps and they can start out with me and Mrs Douglas are going to do these first few steps and then they begin to see how some of the steps they can take over themselves. And eventually be the initiator of those changes. And then the third part of their action plan is simply a date by which it's going to be done. Because believe it or not, being gifted does not necessarily mean you're organized and being gifted does not preclude being a procrastinator, so just having those dates of when it's going to be done that they can be checked off and for many kids that really is as simple as it sounds. The key to making the change. And then as you said before you get to the end of this and if you haven't made the changes you want to change, then you re-gear. Do we go back and do, do we find a different way of achieving this or is it okay to just let this goal go?

Debbie: That's so great. Thank you so much for sharing the four step process. It makes absolute sense and there's just a lot of nuggets in there in addition to all the great resources that you shared, which just to let listeners know I will go back and I will compile everything and include it in the show notes pages because I want to make sure we can all find those books and the other resources that you shared with us. But before we go, I would love to know for listeners who have a gifted kid who, you know, they're listening to this and they're like, gosh, I really want to get me some of this, like I want to help my kid on this path of self advocacy. Can you give maybe one tip or strategy that of where they can start today?

Deb: Of course, the first thing I would say simply ask a child, how are things going? How is school going? How are your lessons going? How are you feeling about about yourself and about your life as a, as a gifted or bright or however we want to call it individual. And then the second thing is to listen. And for some of us sometimes that's one of the most difficult part because I found myself and listening to my own children, I wanted to rush to explain that this is how things are or sometimes just denying their feelings or minimalizing their concerns...

Debbie: or problem solving. Right. Going right into problem solving mode.

Deb: Yup, Yup. Or providing our own answers that are our own solutions for what they might want to do. So listening is so important. And as we do that to ask them the questions that, that will lead them to find their own answers and then together to act with the children. And I think first thing is to gather information about their learner profile, gather information about the options that are around us, consider those options and help them to weigh those options in relationship to their own learner profile and what their own abilities are. And then just like I said, like I do in the workshop, set at one goal that they would like to set for themselves and figure out what do we need to do to achieve that goal, but to make sure that it's a goal of their own. Now there's one other thing you might do, and this sounds we're coming at it from the negative, but I asked gifted kids to tell me what their gripes are. Too often I think gifted kids feel like if they

complain about anything, the response from adults as you are so lucky to be so bright or you are so fortunate or aren't you glad you don't have to struggle like some students and so they don't tend to tell us what their concerns and their frustrations are. When I asked that question in in the workshop, I get dead silence for a little while and then I hand them another resource you'll want to have eight great grapes of gifted kids. Again, this comes from Jim Delisle and Judy Galbraith Book Team Survival Guide for gifted kids survival guide and the kids read through the in my workshop, read through these gripes and they either cross out or they circle things and then they start talking to each other. Then they discover that many of them share similar gripes and frustrations and if we. I hate to say start there with our kids, but if we let them express those frustrations to us and then say, what's the greatest frustration? How would you like to change that and let's turn that frustration into a plan for change. Let's together work on a way to eliminate that. That's another really good way we can we can we begin with our students and let them be honest with us about what it's like, the pros and the cons of being a gifted individual.

Debbie: That's great. I just have to say that if my child were in that workshop and asked about the gripes, he would have no problem sharing. Just have to say that. So before we go, can you just let listeners know where they can learn more about you and find you online?

Deb: Yes, I have a website. My workshops are called GT for gifted and talented, GT Carpe Diem. So my website is gtcarpediem.com. I also have a Facebook page that's [GTcarpediem](https://www.facebook.com/GTcarpediem). I also have my personal Facebook page and I tweet at [@deb.douglas52](https://twitter.com/deb.douglas52).

Debbie: Okay. Well again, listeners, I will include links to all of Deb's contact information and social media on the show notes page.

Deb: Can I give one last little promo? Yeah, please. Um, last year I published my workshop facilitator guide and all of the resources with Free Spirit Publishing, and it's all in a book called *The Power of Self Advocacy for Gifted Learners: Teaching the Four Essential Steps to Success* and it's available from Free Spirit Publishing. It's available at Amazon and Barnes and Noble online and all those places and everything I've been talking about today is expanded on in the book and there's more and I'm very happy to answer any questions about that or beyond that if people want to email me and there's contact information on my website through Facebook.

Debbie: Perfect. Well this has been so insightful. I think we'll have to discuss bringing you back on again for another episode because I think there's a lot more that we could get into, but so many great takeaways. I know I learned a lot and again, you know, I think even for parents who are listening whose kids aren't gifted, there's still many valuable tools here that they can incorporate in helping their child just understand who they are as a learner and how they can get what they need. So I really appreciate you coming by today and sharing all of this with us.

Deb: Oh Deb, thanks for this opportunity to share. It's my passion now is you can tell, I can hardly say that talking about it, so I have. I appreciate the platform and I'm happy to talk anytime

Debbie: You've been listening to the Tilt Parenting Podcast. For the show notes for this episode, including links to Deb's website, GTcarpediem, her book, The Power of Self Advocacy for Gifted Learners, and all of the many resources that Deb mentioned in this episode, just visit parenting.com/session126. And if you get value out of this podcast, please consider supporting it by making a small monthly contribution to help me cover the cost of production. There is an easy way to do this there. An online platform called Patreon. So my Patreon campaign, which is funded by listeners just like you, is helping me cover the costs of my fabulous editor, Donna, who takes my recorded conversations and intros and outros. She cleans them up and tags them for iTunes, uploads them onto my Soundcloud account and she's now starting to make audiograms for me, so this saves me literally hours of time each week and that allows me focus on the other pieces of keeping going, supporting this community...I want to do more with the Tilt Together initiative I mentioned at the beginning of the show. So if you want to support Tilt, you want to support this podcast, just go to patreon.com/parenting. Patreon is spelled p a t r e o n, and you can also find the link on the Tilt Parenting website on any of the show notes pages. Of course, I couldn't end up podcast without my weekly reminder to leave a rating or review for the show on iTunes or Apple Podcasts. There are a lot of parenting podcasts out there, more coming out each week and those ratings and reviews help keep this podcast highly visible. So thank you so much for that. And of course, thanks again for listening. For more information until parenting visit www.tiltparenting.com.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- [Deb Douglas' website](#)
- [The Power of Self-Advocacy for Gifted Learners: Teaching the 4 Essential Steps for Success](#) by Deb Douglas (NOTE: use code "POWER" for 25% discount and free shipping. Book includes GT Carpe Diem workshop facilitator guide and all materials needed to run a workshop. Free book study guide also available.)
- [Deb Douglas on Facebook](#)
- [Deb Douglas on Twitter](#)
- [A Guide to Self-Advocacy](#) (episode from Mind Matters Podcast)
- [Letting Go While Holding On](#) (Article in *Parenting for High Potential*)
- [Empower Gifted Learners to Advocate for Themselves](#) (Free Spirit Publishing blog)
- [Renzulli Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students](#)
- [James Delisle PhD \(The G Word\)](#)
- [Programs and Services for Gifted Secondary Students: A Guide to Recommended Practices](#) by Felicia Dixon
- [Re-Forming Gifted Education: How Parents and Teachers Can Match the Program to the Child](#) by Karen Rogers
- [8 Great Gripes of Gifted Children](#)