



**Episode #110:**

**A Conversation Between Debbie and  
13-year-old Asher About Education**

May 29, 2018



Asher: It's like if you have like an emergency preparedness kit or something, And like it's like, oh, I'm not good at first aid, so I'll just throw it all the first aid supplies. If you're not good at something you still need, you still need to know it.

Debbie: Okay. I'm taking note of this for next year for our school.

Asher: No, no, don't do that, I mean for *other* people.

Debbie: Welcome to the Tilt Parenting podcast, a podcast featuring interviews and conversations aimed at inspiring, informing, and supporting parents raising differently wired kids. I'm your host, Debbie Reber, and today I have for you an Asher Special episode. For those of you who are newer to the podcast, when I launched this show a little over two years ago, Asher and I recorded episodes together every couple of weeks. In fact, we made nearly 20 of these, quote unquote "Asher Specials" to date. And as Asher is growing up and into his teen self, he is very appropriately becoming more private and his thoughts and feelings so we are cutting back on the episodes that involve him. However, we did decide to do this one last episode on the topic of Education as we've been having lots of conversations about this ourselves lately and we thought it might be interesting to share for the podcast. So today we're going to talk about how Asher learns, what he thinks schools get wrong when it comes to supporting atypical learners, and what ideas he has for schools for becoming more inclusive. I hope you enjoy our conversation. And if you are newer to this show and you like hearing actress perspective or maybe you're enjoying listening to it with your differently wired child, definitely go back and listen to the other episodes we've done together or again, co-listen to them with your kids. You can find them all at [tiltparenting.com/podcast](http://tiltparenting.com/podcast). Just click on the button for Asher Specials and you'll be able to access all of them right there.

But before I get to our conversation, we are down to just two weeks until my book *Differently Wired* comes out and that means two weeks are left for you to pre-order the book and get the exclusive extras that I created for people who buy it before June 12th. I put together four bonuses, including more than 30 downloadable pdfs, of check sheets and templates and sample contracts and daily tools you can use with your child about everything from screen-time to goal planning and more, a cheat sheet for what to say in difficult situations with others, whether it's teachers or family members or friends, the *Differently Wired* digital resource guide, which is an online way to access every single resource that I mentioned in the book with just one click, so one click to the books and research and podcast episodes and articles, and then a virtual four week book club where I'll be sharing additional behind the scenes and tools that I use in relation to certain aspects of the book as well as time to ask questions and learn from other parents who are in the same situation as you are. So all of those bonuses are available only to people who pre-order the book before it comes out on June 12th, so if you want to learn more about that, you can just go to [tiltparenting.com/book](http://tiltparenting.com/book) and all the details are there.



Also, if you live in or near Seattle, Portland, San Jose, Chicago, Washington D.C., Baltimore, Maplewood, New Jersey or New York City. I am coming to your neck of the woods this June for my Differently Wired Tilt Your World Book Tour. These events are starting to fill up. I love getting email notifications from Eventbrite saying someone has just RSVP. I would love for you to join me in conversation about how we can change the future for differently wired kids. For all of the dates, the tour stop info, and to register for one of the events. Just go to [tiltparenting.com/tour](http://tiltparenting.com/tour). You can also find information on the Tilt Parenting Facebook page. Thank you so much. And now here is my conversation with Asher.

Debbie: Hey Asher, how are you?

Asher: Great! How are you?

Debbie: I'm good, thank you. We haven't done one of these Asher Special episodes in a while and I wanted to just have a conversation with you. We've been having a lot of discussions about education, the state of education, what your education looks like, changes we're making all those kinds of things and so I thought we'd just have a conversation rather than a specific Q & A or anything like that because I think your thoughts about education are interesting as someone who was in the system and now it's being homeschooled and you're learning kind of in an alternative way. Does that sound okay with you?

Asher: Yeah, that sounds great.

Debbie: So we are wrapping up the end of seventh grade here. I'm just curious how you think school's been this year,

Asher: It's been great.

Debbie: Yeah? We've been, we've done kind of a kind of a mishmash of online classes. We had your dad step in as a teacher this year, you and I did some things together, you had some teachers coming in from outside, so tell me about the online classes that you've done and you don't have to go into the details for each one, but I'm just curious what that format has been like for you taking the virtual live classes.

Asher: It's kind of bothersome because they all happen at night.

Debbie: For you they do because of the time zone difference.

Asher: Yeah.

Debbie: So has that been hard to have school during the day and then have a little time off and then have to get back on a call?

Asher: Yeah.



- Debbie: Yeah, I totally understand that. That's hard. We're actually trying to make a change for next year so that the classes we've chosen, I was really careful so they were earlier in the day like I think 5:00 PM is your latest class because you had one class that was at 8:00 PM this year and I think that was probably too late.
- Asher: Yeah.
- Debbie: I'm just curious what the interaction has been like. Have you enjoyed getting to connect with other kids? Like do you feel like that is real classroom conversation that's happening? Whether it's over the microphone or in the chat rooms?
- Asher: I mean not really because the kids are not the same. There are none of the same kids in each class, so I feel like I only know them through that class.
- Debbie: Through that one class.
- Asher: Yeah. And now that it's over, I'm never communicate with them again.
- Debbie: Oh well maybe you will. You're doing a project with one of your teachers with another student. You guys will probably be in touch for a long time. I have a feeling...
- Asher: That's top secret.
- Debbie: Okay. It's top secret. We won't discuss that. No problem. Well, one of the things that we've been talking about because you're going into eighth grade and then high school will be on the horizon and we're just trying to think about what's working, what isn't working, what we might want to do different. So we have been having conversations about the state of education in general and I'm just kind of curious to know some of your thoughts around education kind of in general, like what do you think are some of the problems with the traditional educational model?
- Asher: I dunno, I'd say the biggest problems are that. Great. I forgot what I was going to say.
- Debbie: It's okay. Take a minute, want me to restate the question?
- Asher: No, I remember what you said. Still thinking, I got one of them. Okay. So I'd say the biggest two problems are that the traditional school system assumes that everyone learns the same way and at the same pace and it's the best possible approach that you could take if everyone learns the same way and at the same pace, but they don't.
- Debbie: Do you think most kids do?



- Asher: Yeah, I would say like majority of kids, the system works well for.
- Debbie: Was that your experience when you were in school? I know that was a long time ago now.
- Asher: Yeah.
- Debbie: So why doesn't that work in your opinion for different kinds of learners?
- Asher: Well, I'll say or say your better than the other people your age in a specific subject, right? You'll be, you're slowed down by your classmates because you're forced to learn the same things that they know and at the same slow pace, even though, even if you're much better at that subject and they are.
- Debbie: Well yeah, and that's just talking about knowledge, but what even about like people who learn in different ways. Right?
- Asher: Exactly, like an approach that works for most people might not work for some people.
- Debbie: How do you think you learn the best? Like what do you think is your best method for gaining knowledge?
- Asher: I have no idea.
- Debbie: Well, one of the things, this is just an observation as your parent and homeschool teacher, you are someone who can read and that you know, some people read things for pleasure, some people read things and they might get little bits and pieces out of it. When you read something you're really good at...
- Asher: ...I always get the gist of something
- Debbie: Well yeah, you get the gist of it, but you also are able to kind of file it away and use that new information and apply it in other areas of your life or make connections between that information and other information you already have stored. So reading is actually....
- Asher: I'm more like intuitive, you know, like I played, I played Kerble Space Program for a while, right? I know all about orbital physics, but I don't really know the actual equations. It just makes sense to me now that going that way would make you go up...
- Debbie: Yeah. And then the other way that you actually learned, we were talking about this the other day because one of your favorite things to do while you're having a lunch break is to watch videos from where you want to share some of your favorite youtube channels that you watch?
- Asher: Uh, well, the best are CGP Grey...



- Debbie: And what is that? Can you explain that?
- Asher: Um, that's just some guy does does videos on random things.
- Debbie: Yeah. That doesn't sound very compelling.
- Asher: No, but it is, right?
- Debbie: Yeah. I would just for listeners, I always say it wrong, it's not CGP Grey, CPG Grey? Is that right?
- Asher: It's CGP Grey!
- Debbie: Oh, I said It right the first time.
- Asher: Yes! I hate it. When that happens, you become so convinced that you're wrong, but you start saying it right, but then you say it, you correct yourself to say it wrong.
- Debbie: Yeah. Okay, so CGP Grey. That is an awesome youtube channel where this guy, whose true identity is, is hidden, right?
- Asher: Yes it's unknown.
- Debbie: We don't know who he is, but he does these videos. They're anywhere from like maybe three to six minutes in length average. Is that right?
- Asher: The longest one on record is 20.
- Debbie: Okay. But the average three to four minutes, they're not that long and he does a lot of geo-political videos. Give some examples of some of the videos he does.
- Asher: He did. He does a lot on geography and terminology, like the difference between Holland and the Netherlands and the United Kingdom and Britain, all the.. He explained the terms that people use and Scandinavia...
- Debbie: and a lot of things on the electoral systems of different kinds of countries
- Asher: Voting systems. Yeah, no, only one of them is actually, only one of the ones he explained is actually used by a country, the rest are just theoretical. And then another great one is Kurzgesagt.
- Debbie: Yeah.
- Asher: They're a German group of animators who do science videos with birds,
- Debbie: Also sounds kind of strange, but they're really awesome. They're like 10 minutes long and they do a new one once a month.



- Asher: Lately it's been weirder and weirder stuff. But they started out with simple things.
- Debbie: What was the most recent one that was weird?
- Asher: I don't know. They had something about like black hole decay like astrophysics. Okay. But their first videos are about more mundane things like banking and
- Debbie: and history, and history of the universe and things like that.
- Asher: But now they've run out of easy things to do videos on. So just doing astrophysics.
- Debbie: Yeah. I can't really follow those if I'm being honest. But, so those two and anything else that you are watching, a lot of you watch Ted Ed video video sometimes.
- Asher: Yeah. Crash Course is great.
- Debbie: Oh yeah. We watch a lot of Crash Course here for sure. If listeners aren't familiar with that, they you know, whether your kids being homeschooled or they're not, they have a ton of series on all kinds of subjects from economics, statistics to U.S. history, world history, religion, physics, chemistry, what am I missing? Media Literacy, mythology. Really everything.
- Asher: Yeah.
- Debbie: So I would say Ash, that that is one way that you learn as well and that is, I think I used to feel guilty about you watching a couple of videos over lunch when you know maybe you should be reading or maybe you should be doing something else, but I've noticed that that is, you are actually learning from all of that. That's one of the ways that you learn and you, you're truly learning and that's helping you think about things that lead into really good discussions together, critical thinking and other stuff. Would you agree with that?
- Asher: Yeah
- Debbie: (Cat meows) I guess Alex agrees to
- Asher: He had better.
- Debbie: Yeah, so I would say that's one way that you learn reading and watching things. I also think that another way that you learn, Asher, is just through discussion.
- Asher: Yeah. Although it's kind of hard to get in discussion, I normally just tell other people about things and ask for their opinion.



- Debbie: Well, but if we're doing like we're studying U.S. history right now, we have some pretty interesting, you know, I'm reading, we're reading the book, The People's History of the United States and that brings up, always sparks some area of interest and then it leads us down a bit of a rabbit hole sometimes. Yeah. Yeah. And that's also a good way. So one of the things as I've had a lot of guests on who catered to Differently Wired learners and are trying to think about the education system and how to fix it. I'm just wondering if you have any ideas about that because it's kind of like the big unsolved problem.
- Asher: I'd say probably the biggest thing you can do is to group people by skill rather than age because right?
- Debbie: and what it and what if they have a different skill levels and different subjects, what would that look like?
- Asher: Yeah. That would look like you'd go to the advanced class in this subject, but the not so advanced class in this other subject. The classes would all be sorted by skill levels, rather than grades, right? Because there is like a cause right now there's like a sixth grade math class, seventh grade math class, eighth grade math class would this, there'd be like a pretty good math class, really good math class, and excellent math class.
- Debbie: Mmm hmm.
- Asher: and depending on your scale you'd be in one of those.
- Debbie: But what if your, I'm just curious like...
- Asher: ...and everyone has, would have to complete the expert class at each subject to graduate.
- Debbie: Okay.
- Asher: So you might start off a year and you're really good at this one subject and you learn it right away and then you don't have to, for example Everyone would learn at their own pace rather than aging at their own pace.
- Debbie: I have a feeling some schools do something similar to that. What do you think about actually different ways of learning, right? You know, addressing that problem. So you're talking about kids at different levels and making sure that they are learning at a level for where they're at, whether that's above level or below level, whatever that those concepts mean. But you know, in terms of if we have this...
- Asher: ...a bell curve...
- Debbie: yeah, a bell curve, but what about kids who their actual learning process is different. Like we were just talking about your someone who learns a lot



through reading and through videos and other things like that. There is some kids who learn in a very tactile way and they actually need to be doing things with their hands. How do we address... I'm just curious if you can solve this problem for all of us.

Asher: Maybe they could just try. I Dunno. Maybe. I Dunno. Maybe they could mix up the methods, right? Worst case scenario, you could just have. You could just find. You could just make categories of learning methods that have a different class for each method or make a different schools for each method. What the heck, right?

Debbie: And that that exists as well. Right. There are some schools that do kind of individualized, fully individualized learning. So each student is learning on their own level, their own pace and in the way that they learn.

Asher: I would say the problem right now. Yeah. I would say people need to be sorted and packed it into categories based on how they learn and how they're learning and put in a class with people in the same category and a teacher who trained to teach to that category. Right. Because right now it's essentially, okay, so we group people by how old they are and then we teach them skills based on how much we think they should know about that subject by how old they are. Like no, that doesn't make any sense. It's basically it's a school for the average human, the school system right now in school for the average human and we need school for every human.

Debbie: Totally agree. So if you think about these different alternative ways of learning and if kids are learning in a way that maybe is different than the typical learner, do you think that that's fine, that they kind of make their way through school learning and the way that they learn and then move on? Or do you think it's important that they eventually learned these more traditional methods of consuming information?

Asher: I don't know. I think, yeah, I think it's not the, it's more the, the core idea of traditional school isn't wrong. It's like it's the, it's more the implementation, you know, like the idea is we get people who learn the same way in a classroom, where their all taught that way, right. You teach as many people as you can, the stuff that they need to know.

Debbie: Yup. If you were to design your ideal school for you individually as a learner, what would it be like?

Asher: It would be like what I just described. Probably you'd be in a class, you'd be in a group of people who learned the same way as you and who were the same level as you.

Debbie: Would your ideal school still have all the same subjects that a traditional school has or do you feel...?



- Asher: Yeah, it would because I do believe that you do need to know a lot of the stuff in school. You do need to know.
- Debbie: Why?
- Asher: Because. It's useful later in life. Right. It's like if you have like an emergency preparedness kit or something, like it's like, oh, I'm not good at first aid, so I'll just throw it all the first aid supplies. If you're not good at something you still need, you still need to know it.
- Debbie: Okay. I'm taking note of this for next year for our school.
- Asher: No, no, don't do that, I mean for *other* people.
- Debbie: I have a record of that. Yeah, I mean I think your ideas. I totally agree with and I think the challenge is that there are a number of schools, you know, especially in the U.S. and I know in other countries that are trying different approaches, democratic schools, and individualized learning, schools that are very project based where the teachers are really only there to guide the students in developing their own ideas. So there are lots of different models, but the challenge is that those schools are almost exclusively private schools and so therefore there's a barrier to entry an economic barrier to entry, the geographic...
- Asher: Entry is an economic term, it's when you can't, it's one, it's when it's really hard to enter a market as a new company, right? Like you might want to make a new, you might want to start a new tech company that makes the best phones ever, but you can't, it's ridiculously hard to start your own tech company and compete with Apple and Google because Apple and Google have such a ridiculously large market share that because that's the meaning of a barrier to entry in economics that cost a ridiculous amount of money to be able to enter this market.
- Debbie: Right. So I guess I'm saying it's the same idea with that private schools because of the very nature of them being private and there being a fee associated with having your child enrolled and also the schools are not located in everywhere where people live, they tend to be in urban areas and so the majority of students of which we already know more than 20 percent are differently wired, don't have access to those kinds of programs. I'm just wondering, do you have any ideas for what schools, traditional public schools, could do to better accommodate or support differently wired learners?
- Asher: Well, what I just said, I mean the easiest thing to do would be to group people by skill level rather than age. Maybe at the start of every year after the first you take a test, you take a test that determines what classes you'll be put in.
- Debbie: Do you think there's a way of doing that though? A lot of schools do separate out, especially for subjects like math, they do exactly what you're talking about. I



mean that was happening when I was in, back in the day when I was a student, you know, starting middle school, we were grouped into our level in math and some other subjects. So that happens. But the problem I have with that is that a.) it, it values cognitive ability based on this one marker of how you perform on this test and b.) it also separates kids into quote unquote the smart kids and the not so smart kids on a very basic level. That's how it could be perceived. What do you think about those comments?

Asher: I don't know. I suppose so, but there are always people who are better at any particular thing and all these people who are worse. It's inescapable. Right.

Debbie: Do you think there are ways to accommodate in a public school system and the system that exists today?

Asher: I mean even in even in the current system where they rank people by age, there are still people who get bad grades of people who get A pluses. It wouldn't be any worse, you know?

Debbie: Do you think within the current system there is room for figuring out a way to accommodate different types of learners, so not teaching everyone the exact same way or...

Asher: I mean the worst case scenario would be that you'd just have different, ideally you'd be able to separate people into different, into a small number of different categories that encompass an equal amount of people.

Debbie: So you'd still have the same infrastructure?

Asher: Yeah, and you'd still have and there wouldn't be like, yeah, that every group would have the same support. There wouldn't be a big group of normal people and four other groups of weirdos. It's to prevent, it's making the cracks smaller so people don't fall through the cracks. That's the analogy, it's making the cracks smaller.

Debbie: Do you think that schools should be able to or should work towards finding a way to support kids who move through the world differently in terms of, you know, just. I always go back to your example that you brought up in many episodes about being someone who moves a lot or fidgets a lot. Like do you think that there's a way that public school, the traditional school system could, could allow kids to kind of learn the way they learn and move the way they need to move while still working for all students?

Asher: Yeah, I mean they could have things to fidget with that wouldn't be loud and distracting to other people. Would probably be easy. Yeah. They could have school issued pens that make clicking sounds for example like this \*clicking pen repeatedly\*

Debbie: Yeah. That's a pen clicking.



- Asher: Exactly. I would say yeah, I'd say work on making fidgeting for example. Less distracting to other people.
- Debbie: What about getting up and moving around in class? Like some, some people like you for example, you think best when you're moving around when you're walking around, do you think that should be allowed?
- Asher: Yeah. Maybe maybe there could be, yeah, I don't like the idea of like assigned seats either, like there might be a few tables on the outside of the class for people to write for example, but yeah, more of like standing up things for example. You know, it's just a few tables around which are some tables and chairs are on the edges, but it'd be open space in all.
- Debbie: Yeah, I like that idea and at the same time I recognize there are some kids who need structure and who really want.
- Asher: Exactly. So they could sit at the desks just there'd be the proportional amount of desks as there are people who prefer desks.
- Debbie: Oh, interesting.
- Asher: Rather than desks for everyone. If you don't like them too bad. There'll be desks for everyone who needs desks, plus a few extras.
- Debbie: Yeah. I think a lot of conventions of the traditional educational system just need to be teased apart, you know, just kind of really look at absolutely everything.
- Asher: Yeah. Because right now in the school system is set up for the average person.
- Debbie: Yeah. And I would argue that it's not even ideal for the average person is such a outdated model in many ways. And uh...
- Asher: yeah, I mean the original ideas in the school system was thought up in Victorian Times more than a hundred years ago and it hasn't been changed since, except they got rid of sticks.
- Debbie: They got rid of what?
- Asher: Sticks.
- Debbie: As a corporal punishment tools.?
- Asher: Yeah.
- Debbie: Oh, that's a good thing.
- Asher: Yeah. But that's it.



- Debbie: I think there may have been a few other changes, but it's still the same overall model. I think there is a lot of room to explore. What could we question? Why are we doing this? Why are we doing this? But is there a different way? So that's going to be the Tilt Parenting Phase Two: Changing the education system for differently wired kids everywhere.
- Asher: Well, not just for differently wiring kids for everyone.
- Debbie: Yeah, that's true. Good point.
- Asher: Because again, I would really not like to. It would be bad if any of the categories were significantly larger than the others. Ideally, you'd have like a here I'll draw something, but then again, you can't really show it can you.
- Debbie: You can draw it and I'll take a picture of it.
- Asher: Okay. But like imagine a chart \*drawing sounds\* and like that's maybe group people into. So here are people who have more who learn better this way, here are people who learn better this way, worse that way that by. And you'd put people on this chart by and they fit into one of these areas. I mean it's not perfect like someone, someone who's up here way in the upper left corner might get grouped with someone who's right here or someone here might be grouped with someone there, but it's definitely much better than the current system, which is just one box.
- Debbie: Yeah. Interesting.
- Asher: Yeah. One is, one is too few categories to sort people into.
- Debbie: Yeah. One really isn't a category is it?
- Asher: It is. It's the category of. Yeah. And right now it's just normal people, normal people and everyone else.
- Debbie: Well, I wanna thank you for chatting with me about this stuff. We get lots of requests to do conversations and someone I was talking with a few weeks ago said, what about just an Asher and Debbie Unplugged where you just talk about just have a conversation. So that's what I wanted to try today and super interesting. Just stuff to think about. I wish we had all the answers for how to fix the education system, but I think it's worth continuing to explore and question what could be and I want to keep hearing your ideas about it too because I think you're in such a great position to consider this because because you are one of the students being impacted by the current system.
- Asher: I mean then again this the system wouldn't be perfect still because you would still have the outliers to people at the very edges, but there are always going to be edges and you can't sort people into. The only. The best possible system would be you'd have a category for every person on earth. That would be the



best possible system, but yeah, that's really not possible because then you would need a teacher for every person on earth, separately. So the best you can do is group them into the most categories that won't seriously inconvenience everyone.

Debbie: Yeah. Be Interesting to think about what that magic number is.

Asher: Yeah, I'd say it's definitely less than 10 and more than 1. Generally. That's a good number to go for it.

Debbie: Okay. Well again, thank you for the conversation today. It's a Sunday morning here. Beautiful Sunday morning in Amsterdam. We just got in from a walk and I know you have a lot of things on your personal to do list that you want to get to.

Asher: Oh, I certainly do.

Debbie: I will, I will let you go. So thanks so much for the conversation today, Asher.

Asher: You're welcome.

Debbie: You've been listening to the Tilt Parenting podcast for the show notes for this episode, including links to all the resources Asher and I discussed visit [www.tiltparenting.com/110](http://www.tiltparenting.com/110). If you like what we're doing at the Tilt Parenting podcast and you want to support us. There are a few easy and meaningful ways to continue. This one is to join my Patreon campaign. Patreon is an online platform that allows people to make a small monthly contribution to support the work of an artist or a musician or in my case, a podcaster and it's super easy to sign up and even a small monthly donation helps. \$2 a month makes a difference. If you'd like to support the show, visit [www.patreon.com/tiltparenting](http://www.patreon.com/tiltparenting), or you can find a link on the Tilt Parenting website.

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- [CGP Grey YouTube Channel](#)
- [Kurzgesagt YouTube Channel](#)
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