



Episode #190:

**Dr. Melanie Hayes Talks About Her Big Minds
Micro-School and Educating 2e Children**

January 7, 2019

Debbie: Hey Melanie, welcome to the podcast.

Melanie: Hey Debbie, thanks so much for having me on your podcast.

Debbie: I'm looking forward to this, especially having finally gotten a chance to meet you in person at the Bridges 2e Symposium, I guess last month and I'm just excited to learn more about your work and clue listeners into your school. And I guess as a way to get started, maybe just take a few minutes to introduce yourself. I've already read your official bio, but tell us a little bit about how you introduce yourself and what you do.

Melanie: Sure. Well also I just want to tell you I'm a mutual fan of both Differently Wired and of the Tilt Podcast. I think you're doing some really amazing support for everybody who has differently wired kids around the world. So thank you for that. Thank you. And you know, I think I got started the way most of us do. I have two neurodivergent children. I had twins at 41, and I was a public school teacher at the time, so I took time off after they were born and stayed home with them. And then we went back, we all went back to school happily for kindergarten. And my kids who are 18 now jokingly say they're kindergarten dropouts because we only made it through about halfway through kindergarten. And it was actually at the time pretty devastating for me because I had this career as a teacher and I thought my kids would do great.

We were in a really great school, one of the distinguished schools in the, a very sought after community in California. And my daughter was severely bullied and my son just completely shut down. What happened with my son was he was doing fifth grade math and read at a 12th grade level in kindergarten and they refused to do any kind of acceleration. They said to me, well, if he's doing fifth grade math in kindergarten, what are we going to do next year, because we only go to sixth grade. So I realized I was going to have to do something drastic. And so I pulled them from school and quit my job and stayed home, homeschooling. And that was kind of a shock because I, I tried to do sort of school at home and that didn't work. And then as we went along, we found out that they were both considered to be twice exceptional children.

Both my kids and they, I have their permission to talk about them, but both of them have anxiety disorder. My son also has something called prosopagnosia, which is face blindness. My daughter is a stealth dyslexic, so she has dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyslexia, which is a trifecta of trouble for school. And my son also had a lot of OCD behaviors because of the intense stress of school. So that's what got us started. And when my daughter was about nine years old, she sat me down. This is just my daughter in a nutshell and said, "Mom, I need to see at least four friends four days per week." So that's when I decided to start a little school out of my home, and that's how Big Minds was born. So it started out as a small homeschool school where I invited other neurodivergent kids to come in and do schooling with me at home.

And then I realized pretty quickly that the whole system isn't going to work for 2e kids. So I decided, well, you know, it is kind of a social construct, so why am I trying to adhere to something that really is an imaginary thing that we all buy into but doesn't have to be that way. So I threw it all away and I started from scratch. I ended up going back and getting a doctorate because I realized if I was going to try to roll this out to the public, I would have to have the credentials to be taken seriously. And so that's what I've done. So the Lab School turned into Big Minds, which is now our, our flagship school is in its fourth year and we're opening a second campus next fall and hopefully a campus a year after that. So I'm just really hoping to roll this model out and help people to understand that you can do something radically different in education. That's designed to help our kids be successful rather than set them up for failure.

Debbie: Wow. What a story. And you know, I'm always fascinated by educators who go through this journey. You know, I recently, I recently spoke at a parent event in Seattle and there was a parent on sitting on the stage with me and I recognized him as a teacher from a private school for gifted kids and now he's at home with his twice exceptional kids. And I just find that transition fascinating. If you've been teaching, you know, because you must have had neurodivergence students in your classroom before. And I'm just wondering, what was that like for you?

Melanie: You know, it was so interesting because I had a reputation for being the teacher that all the, the atypical kids liked, right? So I started to get a reputation where people I worked with gifted kids, but people had these differently wired kids started asking for me too, and I'm sure I was a nightmare to my principal because at one time I remember I had no desks in my room. I just had picnic tables with computers and back then computers were pretty new in the school, but I got some donated and we had a bunch of bean bag chairs and all these art stations. And so it, when I look back on it now, I even had sort of the Big Minds mindset back then. I just had created it in my classroom. And so I, I was already a little bit outside the box as a public school teacher. But I have to tell you, it really shook me to the core to have to pull my kids from school because you know, there was so much around my life that was attached to being a teacher.

Debbie: Yeah, I bet. I can imagine just, you know, in terms of, I don't know about existential crisis, but maybe. Identity crisis and what does this mean and yeah, that's, that's a huge transition. And then you said that it didn't work initially, that homeschooling, you know, how soon you pulled them out in kindergarten, how soon did you realize this is this model as is isn't working and why wasn't it working?

Melanie: Well, I think, you know, I tried to do school at home. I'm like, you know, let's do the workbooks. Let's you know, I, I was a trained professional, I could pull curriculum and put together lesson plans in my sleep. And so I was trying to do that with my kids and I did invite some other people to come in for like some art classes in history classes and things like that so that my kids would have companions in the classroom, but it was still that control and compliance model where here I am the teacher, I'm presenting the knowledge that you need to

know, I'm going to teach you how to learn this knowledge and then you're going to demonstrate in some way that you know, that knowledge.

And I'm not going to say I was a really traditional teacher before that. Like, you know, if you want to demonstrate your knowledge in some other way. I remember when I taught fifth grade, we did a unit on U S history and I, I basically wrote down everything they had to demonstrate that they knew from the unit and then they could come up with any way they wanted to do it. And I, I had some really wonderful exciting projects. I mean everything from a play to a video to, you know, they did all kinds of things to demonstrate their knowledge. So it wasn't like I was this rigid, adhere to traditional linear sequential model type teacher anyway. But even that for 2e kids is too much. Like there is still too much control and compliance around how, when and what they learn. And so I had to quickly let go of that and say, okay let me sort of switch to a strengths-based model. How can I put an enriched environment around you where you can see what you don't already know. Cause you know, a lot of 2e kids get very fixated on a subject and they'll explore it in depth for a very long time and become a subject matter expert. But they only know what they know. And so, you know, I want to make sure I expose them to lots of things so that they could find out what their next passion or interest might be. So as I went through that, I started to realize that the way we teach just doesn't work with that. You know, if we are trying to move them through a preset curriculum, it closes all these other doors that might be connected to the thing that they're meant to do in the world.

Debbie: Absolutely. Yeah. I went through a similar, just re-education of myself or reframing, you know, I think it probably took me a lot longer than it took you to realize that I needed to do homeschooling with, with my son in a different way. But you talked about recognizing that these kids need something radically different and that that's what you're doing through your school. So can you just maybe tell about the model of your school and kind of walk us through how it's designed and how it is radically different from what a traditional educational model would offer?

Melanie: Sure. yeah. So, so Big Minds is first and foremost an attachment model, which means we are very much about the relationship. Our teachers work really hard to build trusting and caring relationships with our kids because many of them come to us already traumatized from school, traumatized from experiences with teachers. And so that's our primary goal is for them to feel safe and cared for and respected. And then it's a strengths-based model. So we're always looking at what are their strengths. First, we're not looking at the deficits. It's not that we don't recognize that they're there. But for example if you have someone in who has dysgraphia and fine motor skills issues and their whole school career has been, you know, focused on trying to get them to be do better at handwriting, they've missed out on all the chance to do the things that they do the best.

And so we're just going to go around that roadblock. We're going to either use technology or we'll find some other way for them to demonstrate their knowledge. So the, so the strengths based, it's not about setting a curriculum for these kids. Certainly if we did it sort of the back end and looked at the common

core curriculum, we could attach what they're learning to that curriculum. But we find that really restrictive because you know, 2e kids, if they're really fascinated and interested in something, they can blow through a year's worth curriculum in like a month or two. I've seen kids who suddenly found out about calculus, who loved math and, and went through a whole calculus curriculum in two months. So it's kinda hard to try to set a year long curriculum when each child has this, both asynchronous development and the capacity to learn stuff at such a rapid acceleration.

So we don't have a set curriculum that curriculum that way. The way we do it is each of the teachers is in a room. So the Big Mines kind of looks more like a home environment. We have computers on tabletops and you know, there are tabletops in the art room, but there's not desks and chairs in rooms in a typical setup like a classroom, lots of soft furniture and couches. And the whole school I designed it from there's a book called *The Third Teacher* about how important the environment is for learning. So I thought about what do our kids need in a sensory environment. So the, the whole interior of Big Minds is sort of a sensory soothing environment and there's quiet places where kids can tuck away and read or you know, meditate or do yoga or whatever it is they want to do to relax.

And then, you know, there's like a, a computer room in a science room, an art room and a history room, and a library and things like that. But the kids can move about the school, how will they can work on whatever it is they want to work on. We are there to encourage and facilitate and like I say, provide an enriched environment. And then part of the enriched environment is our school is broken into two set times in the morning is called investigation time. And that's when the teachers are all doing cool things in their rooms that the kids can walk around and see what's going on. I once had an educator walk through and tell me in a very sort of snooty way that it looked like a preschool for big kids. And I thought, yes, that's it. That's it. Exactly. You know, it's this place where they can be creative and curious and they can go see what's going on. And then in the afternoon we have another block called project time and that's to give the kids the time and support to work on their own individual projects. And then for kids who we do have a lot of kids who can't read for various disabilities or the, you know, they've been circling that elementary math train their whole career and they do want to learn how to do traditional math or they do want to learn how to read. Or maybe sometimes our kids would come in. Once they start eighth grade, they start to think about, well, how am I going to be successful in high school? So when they ask for that kind of support, then we'll give them support. We can do math and literacy coaching.

We have a teacher who does life skills class that teaches them how to move into a high school if that's what they want to do. But it's all about what the kids want to do. So there's no control and compliance from the teachers. We're there as mentors and supporters and we let the kids be free to explore what it is they're interested in learning. And it's kind of interesting because we do, we, our WASC accredited, which is the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and they require that you do annual testing in math and literacy. And so we explained to the kids why we had to do it and we gave them a chance to opt out if they didn't

want to do it. They all tested and we ended up with higher math and literacy scores in the state average, which I thought was very interesting because we don't teach that way.

Debbie: That's such a cool model and I, I kind of want to just hang out there. I imagine it's very creative and yeah, I got a really good picture of the vibe there. It feels like it kind of plays that these kids would just feel very much at home in.

Melanie: Yeah. And for a lot of our kids, you know, they, that's their first experience of having kids who are their true peers. So people that they get their humor and are interested in the things they're interested in. And you know, because a lot of our kids have never had the chance to have a friend. They've not really been able to develop those pro social skills that they're going to need for adulthood. So there's a big focus on, you know, helping them to be successful socially. Like we teach them how their brain works and you know, what a pro social skill is and how their amygdala gets overexcited. And you know, all sorts of things like that that help them learn how to be emotionally regulated and cooperative, collaborative with other people, and how to have a friend and, and maintain friendships. Like those things are really important too.

Debbie: Yeah, that was actually one of my questions because the social and emotional lives of these kids is, it's just something that comes up all the time. And I hear from parents, it's something that I think about, you know, how these kids who, who are maybe so asynchronous and so they're just not operating or interested in the same thing as their same age peers often. And so I was wondering what that actually looks like. Is the environment there like do the kids really find each other? Does it seem to create that atmosphere where they, they really do feel like they're in a community of likeminded or at least other kids who accept who they are?

Melanie: Yeah, they do. So that, that's another big focus as part of being an attachment community is we really teach them about what their abilities and their disabilities are. And we help them to be thoughtful and caring about everybody. So for example, that you, you might have a child who's having a meltdown and they're crying because they couldn't figure out how to do something. You know, in another school they might be made fun of if their fifth or sixth grader who's crying because their Lego construction didn't come together the way they wanted it to. But, you know, in our community that we understand that everybody has those moments where you're emotionally dysregulated and go into fight, flight or freeze. We really try hard to teach them about you know, Mona Delahooke's work or based on the polyvagal theory by Stephen Porges about what happens when they, they go into that mode and how to self soothe and bring themselves back.

And so when they understand all those kinds of things at a deeper level, they're not going to make fun of each other and they're not gonna bully each other. I mean, that's not to say that if we have a kid come in who's been bullied their whole life and then suddenly there's somewhere where they're not being bullied, sometimes they do try out bullying because you know, that's what they've been

been exposed to. So they're, they're mirroring it in our community and we just love them through it and help them understand that that's not how they're going to achieve what they really want to achieve. And we, we don't condemn them or make them feel like they're a bad person because they, they tried this experience. We just help them see what works and what doesn't work. So, you know, that's kind of like the whole discipline model there is around.

It's kind of based on Ross Greene's work. We call it the empathy channel, but you're going to approach any situation with curiosity. Like, how can I help? What do you need? What sort of support do you need? What's going on? You know, and it's not a punitory of, it's more of how, what, what thing is happening to you right now that you need support with so that we can help you get regulated again. And when kids know that they're treated that way, a lot of the kinds of problems you get in schools go away because this school is actually designed to meet them where they're at. And not to try to change them, but to celebrate who they are. And they, they do feel like they've found their people. In fact, I literally had a kid who came for a shadow week that said, Oh my gosh, I've found my people. That was the exact words he used. And so, you know, they find kids who, who do share those intense passions about, you know, I have a kid who makes these amazing puzzle boxes and he found some other kid who loves that. And there's another kid who loves World War II and he found another kid who loves that, you know, so. So they are more likely to find somebody who shares those deep interests and passions and can think of that very high intellectual level in a way that's gratifying to them. You know, you can imagine if you have this adult intellect and you're sitting in a third grade classroom day after day or even in a kindergarten classroom and you say you want to play, you know, somebody says, Oh, let's play dinosaurs and you're all excited and you go start expounding your dictionary of dinosaurs and they all look at you like you're weird and runaway. You know, I mean, that's what most of our kids have been through until they get to a place where they're with true peers. Yeah.

Debbie: So I have to just ask you, because this is the, the other, this is the big conversation, right? How do we support kids who don't have access to a Big Minds to, you know, to, to a Bridges and, and there are so many kids in this situation and we know that 2e kids are probably the trickiest of, you know, to, to really support in a traditional setting. So do you have ideas, I'm sure you do, about, you know, things that teachers who are working in a more traditional model things that they can do to support their 2e students?

Melanie: Yeah, so I, I wrote a whole series in 2e News about how to build a school that works for 2e children, but it's harder to get teachers to step outside the box because they have so much pressure to adhere to the system and to, you know, be in that compliance model. But really most good teachers when they close the door, they do what their kids need rather than what the system is telling them to do. You know, that more bureaucratic approach. So I will say if you're that kind of teacher that can close the door and give our kids what they need, the number one thing is they should never have to do rote practice on something they've already mastered. So that a teacher, if you've got a child who is already way past

your math level, they should just be able to test out and then go do something they're interested in during that time.

And I know teachers bulk a lot at this, but I'm like, why you, your job is to teach, let's say you've got a fifth grader, your job is to teach them fifth grade math. If they can take the end of the year math assessment and demonstrate to you that they already know fifth grade math, why would you make them go through it again? Because you know, that's Dr. Gross's about exceptionally and profoundly gifted kids. She said they waste like 70 to 80% of their time in the classroom doing things they already know how to do. So right. There is a recipe for underachievement and disengagement. And then I think the second thing is to, to build a community in your classroom where everybody's quirks and foibles are understood and accepted and everybody's strengths are celebrated no matter how divergent they are. I think that the teachers can really set the tone.

You are the authority in the room. And so you have the capacity whether or not to make this kid's life miserable. And you know, it takes a, a person who is pretty emotionally regulated themselves because 2e kids and neurodivergent kids can be difficult if you don't understand how to work with them. So, you know, really educate yourself on what these children need because when you support them in the way they needed to be supported, they are so delightful. I mean, it's like having such an interesting person in the room to talk about that they have perspectives about life that you may not get from anybody else. You know, I think, I think every adult over 40 should have a child mentor to, you know, keep him introduced to that freshness in life. So, the, so those are the two main things to just build that bond with your students, to really build a caring community, to really see the strengths and wonder and lovely things about each of the kids in your classroom, to let him test out of what they already know, not make them do rote practice homework. You know, if you have a homework sheet of 20 problems, can they just do the five hardest problems to demonstrate their knowledge? Because that's the thing that kills our kids the most is just having to do the same thing over and over again that they already know how to do, you know, when their mind is craving novel and new concepts.

Debbie: Yes, or just not seeing the purpose in something when they're like, but I already know this. Yeah. I mean, kills love of learning,

Melanie: For for everybody, not just kids. Like imagine if you had to be, you know, sitting in a classroom for six hours a day doing something you already know how to do. And, and I, I get that it's hard because there is a, you know, grade levels and the kids are supposed to learn this at each grade level, which most of that is so arbitrary anyway, you know, and there's so much repetition anyway, so, and people are afraid of letting kids have freedom, but if you let them work on something they're passionate about, I'll tell you a little story. There was a teacher that I was working with who had a very exceptionally gifted child in her classroom and he could test out of everything, basically like every subject she was teaching in class. He already knew how to do and he became very disruptive and was kind of making her life very difficult. And so we talked and I asked her what he was passionate about and she said, well, all he wants to do is just draw a

fish. He's got, he wants to make this sort of Audubon with hand colored watercolor illustrations of the fish of California. And he's, you know, he wants to be an ichthyologist and you know, I just don't see how I can let him do that all day because, you know, I, it's my job to give him this well rounded education. And I said, but he already has the well rounded education.

He already knows everything you're supposed to teach this year. Why don't you let him create this wonderful book? So to her credit, she did, she's, you know, she let him test out of every unit. So she had proof that he was doing and he understood that he needed to take the test to prove that he knew the stuff because that's what our system requires. Right. And then he spent his year making this absolutely exquisite book about the fish of California. I mean, I think it could have been published. It was so beautiful because he did both the illustrations and the research about it. And he was never another problem in the classroom because he was engaged. He liked his friends, he liked the teacher, he liked going to school. He was just bored out of his mind. So when she gave him this project, he spent his days doing that and the other kids sometimes gave a little push back. But she under, you know, she explained to the rest of the class that sometimes fair isn't equal, that what one person needs looks different than what another person needs. And I think that's possible for our kids. I just think it takes a really enlightened teacher to do it.

Debbie: I love that story. And it makes me think too that these are things that parents who are advocating for their students and a 504 meeting or an IEP meeting could ask for specifically, can my child test out of this? Can we get rid of the 50 math problems every night? That just kills, you know, our evening enjoyment or time for personal projects. Any, any other special accommodations that parents could push for?

Melanie: You know, I think I will be radical here and hopefully this won't be too shocking to your audience, but you know, parents have a lot more power in the school system than they, the school system wants you to know that you do. So you can say, you know, in elementary, especially my child won't be doing homework. There's no research that proves that homework is useful for an elementary child. This is our family time. And I'd be happy to write a note telling you whatever enrichment activities we did in lieu of homework. So that's one thing you can do. You can just flat out refuse to do it. Or you can ask can they demonstrate mastery on the five hardest problems, those kinds of things. But really for 2e kids that wrote homework, they've already endured so much during the school day. And for our kids, a lot of times they feel overwhelmed just trying to deal with the sensory and the social and you know, all the other deeper emotional issues and, and physical sensory issues at school that then to come home and have to do more of this rote practice, which is already devastating for them.

It's no wonder our kids rebel and, and I, I want to say that I actually think the rebelling is a good thing. I think too often where we as adults buy into, but that this is what school is, this is what you have to do. You have to do these things to be successful in school. And once you're successful in school, then you go on to college, you will be successful there and then you'll have a successful life. That's

not true for many of our kids. And so I think you as a parent, you have to really be an advocate for your child, for who they are. So, you know, I encourage you to step back away from all the societal pressures of what you should do for school. And I know you talk about this in differently wired too, and I totally applaud it. They need to look at their kids and say, what does my kid need? What, what would really keep my kid engaged and excited and working towards this thing that's going to be a vocation in their life rather than how am I going to make them be successful in school? And I, I do say that with a recognition that for many people, you know, you're a single parent or you know, you're at a, in a socioeconomic situation where you cannot homeschool your kid. I get that. But then you can just be an absolute no, I don't want to say no compromise, but, but you need to be the person who has your kid's back and you go in and say this is what my kid needs to be successful and I will work with you to a point. But then there's a point where I'm going to say no, that's going to be damaging to my child and I won't be complicit.

You know, it's, it's a, it's a radical way of looking at educating and trying to change the system. Because if you think about it, the system is designed for kids who are neurotypical. And so we're asking our kids to go into a system that absolutely doesn't work for them and we tell them that you have to match the system. Then they end up feeling broken. So how much better is it to say, you know what, the system's not designed for you. Let's see if we can tweak it in ways that makes it work for you. Then the message for your child is you're not broken. You're just trying to make do with a system that doesn't really work for you and I'm here to help you make that happen.

Debbie: Yeah, fantastic. And I completely agree with everything you shared. What popped up for me is this idea, which I talk a lot about, which is questioning everything. And I'll just say that as my son's gotten older, it feels almost radical to be when he says he doesn't agree with an assignment or he doesn't know why he needs to fill this form out a certain way. I'll be like, so do it your way and write down, explain why you did it that way. You know, I've just, I've stopped trying to, well, because when you're doing, you know, I used to always try to get him to just comply because that's "what we need to do." And when you, when you start empowering them to think, "actually that's probably not true. So if you feel strongly about that, then go ahead and write that down and talk to them about it and see what you can figure out." And then it's kind of handing the reins over to them to be their own best advocates.

Melanie: Right. Because what you're teaching them is to not accept an unjust system. Because really if you're talking about a movement towards an oppressed group of people, which I know for a lot of people that sounds sort of extreme, but our kids are oppressed. I mean, look at all the news of children who are being, you know, in locked in rooms and held in restraints and you know, things because the, the people, the adults in the room don't know how to be emotionally regulated adults in the room. I just feel like we need to teach our children from a young age how to stand up for themselves. And that's, that's really important. I was in an IEP the other day for a high school student who was, you know, he was

in the IEP and he was saying, I'll do what is needed, I'll, you know, I really want to have this high school experience.

Melanie: And they were scolding him for being late to class. And this is a kid who has a health problem where he needs to use the bathroom pretty often. And, and he said, well I have a hard time going to the bathroom and making it to class on time. Is there a way you guys can recognize? Can I have a hall pass? It's something about my health issues. And they said, no, you have a responsibility to get to class within five minutes. And he said, well, I think that's inhumane. And I thought you go man, you tell him that is inhumane to say to someone who has a health problem you can't go to the toilet when you need to for as long as you need to.

Debbie: Absolutely. So that leads me to my, to my next and last question actually, I just want to know what your thoughts are on how we can help people who don't get it to get it. And I, in fact, that's counter to what I tell a lot of my listeners, you know, if they've got friends who don't really understand no matter what, what's going on with our kids, that it's not our job to convince them. However, I feel like with gifted and 2e kids, there is so much misunderstanding. So many people just aren't even aware of who these kids are. Their differences are invisible. They think we're being indulgent. They think, you know, there's just a whole plethora of myths and beliefs out there. And so I'm just wondering what thoughts you have about how can we, whether they're professionals or they're parents, help them better see our kids and recognize why they need what they need.

Melanie: Yeah, I, I'm with you on that. I mean, I feel like we shouldn't have to defend ourselves and explain ourselves, but on the other hand, if we don't, we're never going to broadly help people understand. So a lot of the work I do is to educate professionals because I feel like if I can get them to understand then they can go out and touch so many more lives. And kind of the approach I do is I, first off, I want them to understand the sensory piece for our kids. I want them to understand the emotional dysregulation piece. I want them to understand the social piece. And also I want them to understand how it feels to be so much smarter than everybody else in the room. And I know people cringe at that. They really have a hard time with the gifted piece in the, you know the, it's sort of like, we're trying to say that our kids are so much better, but if we don't acknowledge that they have these extremely high intellects and they're being asked to reign it in, you know, so you've got this race horses locked in the stall all the time, that is so damaging to who they are as a human being and what their potential is. So I think it's really important to try to help people understand first and foremost really how smart our kids are. Secondly, how a lot of them, the sensory and anxiety piece seems to be sort of hardwired into that extreme intellect and so they're also coping with that and then not being able to have friends in a way that they have a chance to develop those close friendship ties and work through the hard part, hard parts of friendship that give you a chance to develop the pro social skills. You'll need to be an adult in the world. If you don't get the other people to understand that's what your basic needs are and be willing to accommodate you and work with you in a way that helps you be successful, then

you really are a minority who deals with these sort of aggressions everyday of your life.

Debbie: That's great. Great food for thought. Great answer and so glad that you are an advocate for our kids and doing this work and that you, you took what you needed and you created it to benefit not only your family but others as well. So can you, before we say goodbye, just take a few minutes to tell listeners where they can learn more about you and

Melanie: Sure. I wrote a book called, We Tried Normal, and it's free on Medium. I think you could just Google We Tried Normal and I think for someone who has never been exposed to anything about twice exceptionality it's a really good primer. It's made up of sort of 10 chapters of stories of families. They're actually families I worked with over the last 20 years. I've, I've made fake families, so to protect privacy, but the quotes are verbatim and the situations are real. So I think for someone who has no exposure to what it's like to try to raise a 2e child, that's a resource. Also they can Google bigminds.org to find out more about Big Minds. I'm at drhayes2e.org. There's a website that has my blog. But I think also I feel like you're sort of ground zero to find out more about twice exceptionality and neurodivergent people because you've had so many people on that can give you an a in a brief podcast, such a deep about 2e people in a way that's very accessible to lots of people. So I would encourage people to go through your list and listen to what you have to say on your podcast because I think you've got it right and you've really brought in people who truly understand how to help these kids thrive. And I just think you know, it, it's my life's work. I'm sure it's your life's work. There's a lot of us out there that had been trying so hard to make a difference. And finally I feel like they're starting to be a connection. When I started 20 years ago, I felt like I was the only person swimming upstream. But over the years and through connections like this, you know, you start to realize there's a bunch of us that are creating this web and pretty soon the web is going to change the way we deal with our kids and when that happens they're going to bring their full force of potential into the world and maybe solve some of the problems that have needed to be solved for so long.

Debbie: Yes. Heck yes to that. So listeners, I believe links to all of the resources that Melanie just mentioned, including We Tried Normal her book on the show notes page. And also, thanks for the shout out for my podcast. I do actually for listeners who are newer, if you go to the main podcast page there at the top, you can click on a number of themes and there is a theme just for 2e. If you click that, you will just instantly be taken to a page where all of the interviews I've done that specifically focus on twice exceptionality live there. So you don't have to dig through 180 some episodes to, to find them. So I just want to thank you again. I'm so glad that we were able to connect and in real life and that you could share your work with us and I look forward to more conversations with you.

Melanie: Absolutely. It's been such a pleasure, and again, keep doing the great work you're doing. It's helping people around the world.

RESOURCES MENTIONED:

- Dr. Hayes' website
- Big Minds School Website
- Big Minds on Facebook
- "We Tried Normal—Twice Exceptional (2e) Family Stories" article on Medium
- *Exceptionally Gifted Children* by Miraca U.M. Gross
- WASC / Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- *The Third Teacher* by O'Donnell Wicklund Pigozzi and Peterson
- Dr. Mona Delahooke Looks Beyond Challenging Behavior (TiLT Podcast episode)
- Polyvagal Theory
- Dr. Ross Greene's CPS Model