

## THE STORY GOES | CHRISTINA MENDEZ | BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

**MOLLY:** Hey, it's Molly Cox, and you are listening to The Story Goes, which is a collaborative partnership between KLRN, your local public television station-I like to use that voice, it feels like public television station voice- and SA2020, your non-profit that drive progress toward a shared vision of a *thriving* San Antonio. (00:19) The Story Goes got started as a podcast because we felt like the complete story of San Antonio was not being told and we thought this would be a perfect opportunity for us to introduce you to individuals in organizations that are..quietly..and sometimes loudly at other times..changing the way San Antonio functions. (00:38) These are system disruptors as far as we're concerned, and speaking of system disruptor, that's why I invited Christina Martinez here-not just because she's my friend..but because she's also a system disruptor..and I apparently have a say in that, so it feels like less (Molly deepens her voice) *System Disruptor*...(00:54) You know, we talk about education all the time in San Antonio and we- every single time we ever spoke to large groups of people we say, "What is the *thing*? What is the *thing* that can change San Antonio?" And *always*, it rises to the top, is like the number one priority, is education. And we see more recently, that we're having some challenges-not necessarily getting students through high school, our high school graduation rate has gone up from 78.5% in 2010 to 87.3% in 2017..we're seeing across the board *all* of our ISD's are seeing some good shifts...but specifically, I think, we're having challenges *after* high school...and definitely in that early childhood education specifically as it relates to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade literacy, etcetera. (01:49) Well when we talk about after high school, we're not seeing college readiness going up, college enrollment going up, college attainment going up, and we know *in our city*, that if we were to increase bachelor's degrees by 1%..just about- just over 14,000 degrees, we would see *1.4 billion dollar* economic return. (02:09) So, *how amazing* it is that someone like Christina Martinez, *who* happens to be working at Big Brothers Big Sisters *and* is a newly elected official for SAISD School Board...so, thanks for being here to talk all the things about education! (02:24)

**CHRISTINA:** I'm so excited to be here as a (Christina deepens her voice) *System Disruptor*. (02:27)

**MOLLY:** (in a deep voice) *System Disruptor!* BOWM BOWM BOWM! Alright, let's talk first about your sort of trajectory into elected...official..space- because you've worked in non-profits like your whole life because you ...were a glutton for punishment – I kid, I just- only with my non-profit friends- but, right? You go into the non-profit sector... it's.. we've talked to people before where it's like, "I fell into non-profits." And then I've spoken to people, where like, "Nope, it's my calling!" from the *jump*. How did you end up in the non-profit sector? (03:01)



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**CHRISTINA:** So I... wanted to be a teacher, and so both of my parents were teachers, and so it was sort of this expectation that we would go into the education world- and I wanted to be a teacher, growing up, I was that kid that set up her dolls and taught to them, and I wanted to be a teacher!

**MOLLY (Laughing):** Wait! I wanna know what you were teaching them, is my favorite!

**CHRISTINA:** I would teach them songs, I would teach like the ABC's, sometimes I would get mad at them if they would talk too much..'cuz I got in trouble for talking too much..(Christina and Molly chuckle) So, that was sort of my path...and when I started- so I'm at UTSA, I'm a freshman in college, and I get my first job working at the Whitty Museum, in the education department..and it was there where I started to see this place of being in the education world, but informally. So, I still got to-before I knew it, I was teaching like the hands-on Dinosaur program and the hands-on Texas Wild program, and I handled the snakes and the tortoise and it was fun to be an educator in that spotlight for 45 minutes and see kids get excited and see kids learn, and then they were gone! And then there was-(04:06)

**MOLLY and CHRISTINA laugh together**

**MOLLY:** That's how I feel like having my own kids- Or like I love kids so much that I'd rather give them back to you!...Yeah..

**CHRISTINA:** So, that was fun to me, I liked that educator space, I got to be the educator in this informal way- and that was really fun for me. And then the idea of working in a non-profit was really fun because every day was different- you know, whenever there was an event, there was always food left over that you could eat- hashtag non-profit life...But there was always something fun and appealing about being in the non-profit world. And so I was at the Witte for 6 years- graduated college and just didn't want to go into teaching..and my parents were very upset. They were like, "You're going to be poor *forever*, what's wrong with you?" (04:47)

**MOLLY (laughing in disbelief):** I love how your teacher-parents were like, "You're gonna be poor forever!"

**CHRISTINA:** I know! They're like, "We have it good! We have summers off and we have teacher retirement!" So these were- these were my very happy teacher-parents. And my mom said the other day that there was never a day she didn't want to go to work ..so yeah, there's definitely some wonderful teachers out there... My parents- my parents were those. So yeah. (05:08) So then after the Witte, I did graduated, I did Girl Scouts for a little bit, and then started working for San Antonio Literacy- as the program director, ended up being the executive director there, and then left there to join Big Brothers Big Sisters... and so I've just really appreciated...being in this sort of education space, but knowing that it takes more- like what the schools are doing is



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amazing, but there's other things outside of the child's life, particularly in the out-of-school-time arena where kids need support. And feel like I understood that knowing the kind of support I had growing up, and knowing that kids really need that...[\(05:49\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Yeah, I feel like we all know it, right? As children moving through the school system. There's always a teacher that sort of like they laser focus in on you- there's something about it and they help you sort of navigate the school year- but that- it's that out of school time space, and I think as our populations are growing, as needs are growing, as we start to think more holistically, school is but one, right? Player inside this giant system. So yeah, I'm curious then, that you're working with Big Brothers Big Sisters- clearly the need is there right as...we grow our community- Big Brothers Big Sisters..I feel like I'm saying that and everybody is just like, "Yes, of course we know what that is", will you just make sure that everybody knows what it is Big Brothers Big Sisters? [\(06:34\)](#)

**CHRISTINA:** So we are premiere one to one mentoring organization in the city, and of course across the United States, and several other countries, we believe that you know- pair one adult to one child with an in-person face-to-face mentoring relationship, and through that relationship that child can see other opportunities or other perspectives that they might not have normally seen without that caring adult role model [\(06:59\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Yeah you're basically just extending their support system, okay? So you're working there and decide, "I feel like I need more to do"(Molly chuckles), "I feel like it's important for me to get more involved" and you.. I guess... ran for the appointment.. I guess, is that how it worked? Or you applied? You applied for the SAISD School Board a couple of years ago. And were appointed as an SAISD School Board Member, and you've been there for two years, and you just recently got elected- congratulations. Tell me how that occurred to you? [\(07:36\)](#)

**CHRISTINA:** So I participated in Leadership SAISD in 2014- which is a wonderful program, shout out to them, if you're interested in understanding how the educational system works, they're actually taking applications right now- and two years ago, somebody...was going through the list of graduates and said "Hey! You live in this zip code, (Christina sighs and chuckles) and you- would you consider running for the school board...for this appointment?" And after talking with my boss, who had to...kind of..you know, kinda give me permission because this is sorta taking on another job on top of your regular fulltime job, and talking with my family, I said okay! [\(08:14\)](#) And so, went up for the appointment, there were five of us- you basically go to a school board meeting, they interview you, I was interviewed for about an hour and a half ...in heels... and then they like...

**MOLLY:** They should, like, automatically given extra points!



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**CHRISTINA:** Yes! I'm like, "Hello, I'm in heels this whole time!" No, but this is the best part- so I went to the appointment, the interview by myself, I didn't take my family, I didn't take any friends...I didn't just like know what was gonna happen, and when I get there, everybody had like, a posy of people supporting them! ( Molly Laughs into her hands) And it's just me! By myself! And so even at one point, I have to like ask a stranger to hold my purse while I go up for the interview! So the interview happens, the board goes off for like, three hours and...at the time I had no idea, but they're eating dinner.. and meeting of course (Molly laughs again)... but eating dinner. And I'm, like, "Man, what are they doing? It's so late?! And I'm starving!" (Molly laughs some more) And so they come back out at like 11:30 at night, and it's Patty, and she's like, " We've made a unanimous decision to vote Christina Martinez for the school Board." (09:11) And there was like deafening silence...'cuz I don't have anybody with me! I don't have a posy, so I literally like high-five myself (Molly laughs). And I'm like, "YEAH!" And so that's how it started, it was very simple- just somebody asking me if I wanted to- to take on this role- but it made sense to me, Molly because growing up, in the- not growing up- but in the neighborhood I was living in, at the time, there have been some concerns about school board leadership. Scott Meltzer had run against the person, he came very close, and I supported Scott Meltzer, and I supported some of the changes he was hoping to see...and so I felt like, this was an opportunity to help actualize some of the things that that community was asking for. And so...you know...If not me, then who? Right? Which is always sort of the question I ask myself...(09:57)

**MOLLY:** Ugh, such a good question!

**CHRISTINA:** And...the time was right...and then there was Patty...So who doesn't want to work with Patty?

**MOLLY:** Can we- can we take a moment to people who might not know who Patty Raydel is? Every time that I hear her name- she would be so mad if I...I'm gonna say it anyways – but every time I hear Patty Raydel, there's also a chorus of like angels in my head that go like, "Ohohohohohhh" It's like- yes! Patty Raydel is like the most..beautiful public servants.. like she's forreal! Like the real deal, and I love her so much, and I...am slightly jealous that you get to hang out with her as often as you do. Although, every now and then we go for tacos and that's really awesome- and that's all that matters. (10:40) So, let's talk- to.. how the- you had the appointment there for two years, you had to go up for election. So this is like your first- what I'm trying to do, right, is paint this well-rounded photo or rough, well-rounded story up of a human being who has given her...career to education nonprofits, understanding that schools are not the soul- they cannot be the only people helping a kid get through education systems, right? But there's all these other stuff that's happening, and then you join the very...space that is, could be, a cha- yes it could be a player inside this system, but it's not the only player. So you sort of wear these two hats, and straddle both us out of out-of-school-time as well as in-school-time and decided," Hey, it wasn't enough to be just appointed, I'm ready, I'm gonna run for



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election.” Which is completely different, because at this point, running for election, *you have to have a posy.*

**CHRISTINA:** Oh yes! You have to have a posy. You got to have a posy. You have to have lots of support from the business community...and you have to.. yeah it was the hardest thing I’ve done in my entire life- let’s just say that.. It’s emotional, it’s physical, but I did have a lot of support from the business community, from...a really good campaign team- that you had to do this kinda work. And then, you know, my fellow board members were so, super supportive. I mean Steve Lecibo block walked for me, from Ed Garza, the former mayor, block walked for me. (12:08) And so, you know- the hardest thing for me was along the campaign trail was, like, branding, most people-most voters didn’t know who I was, so I had to really...brand myself, and then of course, you know, along the way when you’re campaigning, there’s things said, or..you know...back and forth, but...my guiding light in this work and why I do this work is really just a testament of how much I value Patty, and what she’s doing, and how you know, she really centers me around the themes of love and kindness and compassion and...growing up in San Antonio, she’s been my real-life role-model. And so now getting to work with her is- is just wonderful...(12:46)

**MOLLY:** Let’s talk about SAISD, because when we discuss, right, high school graduation rates and its increase- so back in 2010, when we created this community vision, we said, “We want to increase high school graduation rates, that happened almost immediately- within the next two years, we started to really see...students getting-and going through ,and graduating...and as I mentioned before, we’re nearly a ten point- 10% growth, right, SAISD itself has been seeing some tremendous growth, as well. (13:18) And I want to talk more specifically about the k-12 space, as it relates to SAISD. What is it, right? What are the things that SAISD is doing that’s helping students get through high school And into college? Because I will say, if we’re gonna talk about the story- the full, complete story, right? What do we hear from everybody, and that is , “Oh yeah, we don’t want to buy a house in SAISD...(Christina: Oh it’s the saddest thing) It’s the literal worst, it makes me so sad because there are some things that are happening in SAISD that are *amazing*. So can we talk a little bit about those things? (13:53)

**CHRISTINA:** So I think the biggest thing goes back to what we said when we started the show, was how- how did we...create disruption in a system that...historically, great things were not happening in? And I can saw that I saw this as an outsider.... So as a nonprofit organizer walking into SAISD, and other district campuses, when I worked at SAIL, when I worked for Big Brothers Big Sisters, I walked in these schools every single day...and I can tell you which schools were wonderful and worked, and which ones did not. They needed some help, and they needed some opportunities, a lot of it was centered around leadership. Some really good, robust principals who knew how to engage with families, but also- you know, what we’re learning now is some of our best principals in the district...are really informed by data. I mean they’re empowering, teachers with data, they’re empowering their parents with data, they’re



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empowering the kids with data. Because the data is everything! And when people feel the sense of ownership over the data, “This is my data.” ...you know, it really- it’s magical for the students and the campus and overall- [\(14:58\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Right, we’re saying- we want to get students through school and then we’re looking at our data to determine who is getting there and who is not. It allows you to sort of pivot and change...fix, you know?

**CHRISTINA:** And is crazy- Is that ten years ago, you had a board that didn’t talk about data all the time... (Molly agrees) And so I think that’s part of the disruption that our current board has been part of, is only talking about things that matter about to kids...we’re-we’re only gonna talk about those things. And if it doesn’t have an impact on kids, and kids’ success, then we don’t need to talk about it too much.

**MOLLY:** I’m sorry, hold on...you’re saying that in school systems, that you’re meeting with kids?!

**MOLLY and CHRISTINA yell excitedly and giggle** [\(15:37\)](#)

**MOLLY:** We’ll just- we’ll just take a moment for that! Okay. Alright, that makes total sense , right? And it feels like it always does- if we lead with kids first, then clearly..right... we would make changes. So talk about- I get it, you’re a data informed- which I understand- but also you’re making some very serious changes to the way that you are even doing school. Yeah? So what are those things?

**CHRISTINA:** So one of the things that we talk about are you know, schools that have high concentrations of poverty- and we’re not really talking about...and poverty itself is very different. One of the things that we are pretty proud of is we have started to see schools as- when you look at income, we look at four buckets of income and your-your lowest bucket is your- you know most as-risk families: very, very low income. All the way up to the fourth bucket, being more of which you consider...middle class: \$35,000 a year, or more a year. And in those buckets, we start to see how campuses fit economically into those buckets. Now on the Edison feeder pattern, which I represent, very diverse...economically. Which statistically, students in very low economic, diverse situations do really well. Because there’s lots of different systems to buffer them. You’ve got more parental involvement, different type of life situations that everybody can understand. You have some schools where majority of the population are the very lowest bucket. And in those schools, it’s really hard to disrupt poverty, because you don’t have some of the built in systems with parental involvement- it’s harder there. [\(17:22\)](#) And so what we’re doing, is we’re trying to say,” How do we disrupt this poverty?” By intentionally designing schools that economically diverse. And so, we’ve done that, so now, when we build out new schools, what we call Choice schools, or what you would



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also consider a magnet program...we're really making sure that there is economic diversity in those schools. Within the student population- then students in a certain...level will have a priority and then we sort of build out the attendance based on what that campus needs to be diverse...economically (18:00)

**MOLLY:** In one of the most income-segregated cities in the United States, this is very interesting.

**CHRISTINA:** It is very interesting. We found that when you create- and so I'll give you some examples: my son's at The Young Men's Leadership Academy, it's the first all-boy public school, we were the first adopters when it came out four years ago, and we've been very happy. But it's very economically diverse, and so my son, who is very privileged- in the sense that he's got two parents, and I went to college, and you know, he's just very- he is also with students that have different lives, different challenges. And it's made him more aware of all the different things that are out there in the world, right. And, by-proxy, you have parents at that school who are very very involved. You have a PTA, you have a booster club, very, very involved parents. And so, those involved parents that do the work that maybe some of the other parents can't.(18:56)I can't, I'm busy. I'm not in the booster club, I'm not in the PTA. But I know there's parents that are doing that work. Because we've created an environment where there's all different types of families participation in those schools, and so you sort of create a network that maybe kids who went to a school who completely just won, demographically, financially, you know, one economic- they wouldn't have those things, and support. They wouldn't have the same access to that robust community, environment. (19:23)

**MOLLY:** So you're- so I've got two questions based on this. One is, you seeing students come shifting in places where you've diversified the economies of the student population, are you seeing better outcomes from those students?

**CHRISTINA:** So we are seeing better outcomes from those students, absolutely. So Young Men's Leadership Academy, those students, we saw the eighth grade scores, they went up- in math, they went up in reading. And we do think it- you know the other thing about those schools, some of the...choice schools (or the magnet schools) is they do have a...an attention to a particular mission of focus. So at Young Men's Leadership Academy, they talk a lot about character, leadership, and discipline, that's all they talk about. They've engrained in them, from the morning they get there, when they leave in the afternoon, they're always having conversations...So the school is just different in the way that they talk to the boys and they ways – the expectations they have for them, and it is- it is very different. Academically, those students are doing well, they're also doing well socially, so yeah, it is, it's very different (20:31)

**MOLLY:** The question then becomes: seeing better student outcomes, we know that you're creating these massive magnet, or choice schools, I think- I wanna dispel a couple of rumors,



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mostly because, like, it's hard to understand it if you're on the outside. So, one is, I am mildly obsessed with Young Women's Leadership Academy. Just- just mildly...they generate millions of dollars for scholarships because these young women are legitimately getting into Ivy League schools, and like, killin' it! They're just doing such an amazing job. What I consistently hear though is, the special schools, and only the special kids get in there. I have this choice school, and it's a magnet school, and only the "good kids"- I'm putting that in air quotes that people can't hear- get in there, right? These are public schools, and you're saying, that's not how... it works, and it's intentional to disrupt the way a school is- the way the boundary line is drawn. Trying to disrupt that. Can you speak to that a little bit?

**CHRISTINA:** So, I think the overall, overarching goal for us- for parents- is that parents have access to high quality schools, whether that be the neighborhood school across the street from you, or whether that be a specialized program, like a single, gendered program, we do absolutely have work to do to make sure that every single school- within SAISD- is high quality. That's the work that we're doing every single day. (22:05) Four years ago, we had 36,000 kids walking into underperforming schools. We've dropped that number to 8,000. And that still sounds horrible to say that. (Molly disagrees and says no) But it still feels bad to say! We still have 8,000 kids- we still have 8,000 kids! (22:19)

**MOLLY:** However, I will say this, and we trumpet it all the time- you've got to celebrate that. Celebrate incremental change- and from 36,000 to 8,000 is ginormous! You've still have work to do- it doesn't mean that the work is over. But, wow! It's amazing!

**CHRISTINA:** It's amazing, it's a wonderful thing to do. The other thing we're trying to do, is we're trying to be innovative and bring in other forms of funding. And this is sort of my Big Brother Big Sister nonprofit that sort of plays in because this is the story we've been saying in the nonprofit world for years, which is, you can't just be dependent on one place for money for school districts, it's state, right? I mean we all- I'm not gonna get into all that, because it's crazy...But one of the beautiful things that our superintendent did, when he got there, he said, "what's happening out there that's working?" One of the things that we knew was that KIPP was sending kids to college at 100%, right. He wanted to understand, so he started talking to the people at KIPP, he started to try to understand what was happening, and after that, he realized we needed more college bound advisors at the high schools! And he trained the way KIPP trained them. We couldn't go to the state for that money. So, he went to Valero, and got an 8-million-dollar grant, so when I say they were leveraging the tax dollars, when we're leveraging your money as an SAISD tax payer, we're saying that we believe so much of the work we're doing, that we're going out of our way to find sustainability for these programs. (23:47) One of the ways we're finding sustainability is by doing these 18/82 partnerships, which bring in nonprofit partners who specialize in, for example: Young Women's Leadership Academy- there is a network out there, a nonprofit, who goes around the U.S... They support Young Women's Leadership Academies across the U.S... We said- we asked them, they have never been a



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partner before- we said, “Would you partner with us? To help us: one, to help us- we’re doing the best that we can, the best practices; two, as a nonprofit partner, guess what you could do to help support this school?” You can raise money. Right? So that’s what’s neat about these 18/82 partnerships, is that they bring in more autonomy. Once the school becomes the in-district charter school, the principal has a lot more say over their work day, if they wanna have a more professional development, they have more autonomy over who they want to hire and keep- talent wise. But then they have this nonprofit partner supporting them and providing sustainability that the public-school system just can’t right now. [\(24:51\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Right. Particularly in Texas, in San Antonio, Bexar County, where you have like seventeen ...whatever school districts- should we say that again? Seventeen school districts in in Bexar County. Your work at Big Brothers Big Sisters, what I’m hearing is, SAISD, specifically, sort of setting up... collaboratives- collaborations that are making it better for the students, and a more student centered, that are trying to get kids not just through high school, but ready for beyond high school. [\(25:19\)](#) And I’m curious how Big brothers Big Sisters plays into that; is that out-of-school-time organization who does mentoring very, very well...How does that partnership work?

**CHRISTINA:** Big Brothers Big Sisters- you know one of our goals is...We have three things that we want all high school students should be prepared for. One of them is to go off and enroll into college- be prepared to go into a two-year, four-year college. Well that means academically and financially being prepared. The second major goal we have is employment. We know that some students don’t- and wont- don’t have the desire to want to go off to college, but if they are gonna go right off into the work place, do they have a vocation license, or certification that’s going to earn them a living wage by 25? And then the third goal- we call them the 3 E’s: Education, Employment, and Enlistment. They can enlist in the military- we know that that’s a great life for lot of people, and so, on Big Brothers Big Sisters side, that’s a big goal for us. Our work place mentoring program is probably where I can say there is the biggest connection for me and SAISD. One, because you know, we have a lot of partnerships with SAISD schools, but that workplace partnership- that workplace program really does allow kids to see what work places are. They get bussed, once a month to the work place they’re going to amazing work places: Chase, Citi Bank, Spurs, Sports, and Entertainment has a workplace...IBC, COSA, the City of San Antonio has two of them... But once a month, kids are walking into a work place and they’re getting to learn, sort of hands-on...What is it take to be an employee in this field? [\(27:01\)](#) And all of the volunteers that serve as big as these work places have very big career paths, some of them have two-year, four year degrees, some of them have gone right into employment, but they had a special skill-set, and so, for me, that’s been a big deal, because it sort of really shows kids a direct connection for whatever their future holds for them. [\(27:20\)](#) One of the things that I think that we’ve been doing really well with the district is really setting high expectations for kids. One of the places where I know we have gotten better- because I’ve seen it, my step-son is a junior at Edison- is really in the rigor. I think that for a lot of the times



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when we would say things like, “The state now looks at how many AP tests- or how many students pass AP tests. Or how many students are college and career ready?” We’re actually evaluated the report card the state gives us, looks at college and career readiness, and we need to know what we’re doing. (27:59) The biggest opportunity there was the rigor. And I think a lot of the time, I know I would see kids- I have a story about a special magnet program at Edison, and when I got there, I said, “Well how many kids have gone into this field?” None of them had. None of them have passed the certification test to go into that field. And I’m like,” Woah, like, that’s a big problem.” And it has been there like a nine-year-old magnet program. And while it was really nice to say, “We have this magnet program! It’s wonderful!” We were doing such a disservice to those kids and those families because they weren’t passing the test, and it was such a waste of resources, and money. (28:41) So one of the big alarms that I sort of sounded, and I appreciated that the superintendent... well... (Christine starts quietly giggling)... you know...took action and we really had vamped up our vocational program, career program. We have a new guy that came in from another district, Johnny Valhalik, really just sort of taking on, understanding that kids- if we really are gonna make the promise to families that their kids are gonna be career ready, they take these programs, they take these classes that they have to do it. (29:11)

**MOLLY:** I really appreciate sort of the idea that it’s like it’s college, it’s career, we’re legitimately trying to like- when they leave us for adult life, right? We think what they’ve seen over the last several years is there was a major dip in professional certificates, and what we’ve seen is that it’s coming back up again, which is really important. (29:32) Alright, I’m gonna wrap it up here with the thing that we always ask, which is, you’re a school board member, you’re a parent, you work in Big Brothers Big Sisters, a nonprofit out-of-school-time-space. What’s the thing- somebody listening right now needs to know that they can get up and go take action on increasing student outcomes and putting kids first...What’s the thing? (29:54)

**CHRISTINA:** So, I would say that the big thing right now is- is parenting. One of the things that I always bring this back to is, you know, when people are upset about whatever it is in this city, the root cause is because our parenting sometimes. We don’t always know as parents how to support our kids in school, how to be good advocates at our kids school when they’re not doing well. Part of my passion, and why I’m at Big Brothers Big Sisters, and why I’m on the school board, is because I want to empower parents to know that the schools work for them. (30:26) Parents are the customers of our schools, and I want to empower parents to know that there is a certain way you should be treated, there is a certain expectation you should have when your child is being educated. Because when parents can learn how to advocate and be at the table with the educators- it only benefits the kids. We just had gotten to a place, I think where parents felt that kind of empowerment, but that is my, sort of, strategy and the work that I’m doing right now: is to empower parents, I think it’s important and we all have to work together.



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Parents are a big part of their child’s early education, the first 1,000 days of birth, and so the more we can work with parents to have them understand their role, the better the systems are. (31:12)

**MOLLY:** Yes, and also, it’s helpful, right? To have somebody in a leadership position say, “ Our system needs to include our parents.” So, alright, I appreciate that completely, again, anything that you’ve heard about today we will have online at [KLRN.org/thestorygoes](http://KLRN.org/thestorygoes) . As an elected official, you can tweet at Christine!

**MOLLY and CHRISTINA laugh**

**MOLLY:** You can just tweet right at her! And also, I would suggest that you learn more about SAISD, this is our urban school district – like it’s the one inside where we like, want to build..our...community...! Go check it out! And thank you so much for listening, thank you so much for being here, and doing all the things. And then, always, you know, (quietly) maybe put kids first.

**CHRISTINA:** (Whispering)Put kids first, guys. (31:56)

**End!**



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