

## THE STORY GOES | JEANNE RUSSELL | CAST SCHOOLS

**MOLLY:** (loudly) Hello! (normal voice) It's me, Molly with SA2020, and you're listening to The Story Goes. *And* there's a brand- new thing happening, we brought in our co-host: Kiran Kaur Bains.

**KIRAN:** Thank you for saying my name correctly. (MOLLY laughs) You pronounced it really well. (0:16)

**MOLLY:** (laughing) Why wouldn't I pronounce it?

**KIRAN:** Hi everyone!

**MOLLY:** It's always Kiran Kaur Bains, and it's like a big running thing. Why wouldn't I pronounce it? We've been working together for *years*.

**KIRAN:** I mean...

**JEANNE:** I don't think I've ever heard that middle name actually.

**MOLLY:** (shocked) Really? Wow, alright. (0:31)

**JEANNE:** You just rolled it out.

**MOLLY:** That one talking right there, the other person talking, is Jeanne Russell, who is our guest for today for CAST Schools. We are going to talk about that, too. The Story Goes is actually a collaborative podcast between SA2020 and KLRN, your public television station, and you can find everything we talk about today online at [KLRN.org/thestorygoes](http://KLRN.org/thestorygoes), and then you can do things like subscribe and stuff like that. I think that's what you say like technically, but I don't really know. It's like on all the platforms. That's how you know your professional, when you're like, (funny voice) "I think you can subscribe or something on all the platforms." Um, (very loud and excited) Jeanne Russell has been a friend of mine for a minute.

**JEANNE:** For a long time.

**MOLLY:** For just a minute or so, maybe a decade. And uh, Kiran is over at SA2020 as our Director of Community Impact, and we are going to be talking about today, more specifically about education and economic development in San Antonio because we know, and we keep saying it, like a 1% degree shift, Bachelor's degrees or higher, in San Antonio MSA would literally result in \$1.4 billion economic return to our community. But more specifically, we do not have, I cannot keep stressing this enough, a jobs problem in San Antonio. We have a



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workforce challenge. We have been desperately trying to figure out what does that look like then? What's the, sort of, 1, 2, 4, 7, 12 punch, right? How many different strategies do we need to deploy to make that happen? CAST Schools is one of those strategies. [\(2:09\)](#)

**JEANNE:** Yeah.

**MOLLY:** It just so happened that you, this person who enjoys young people, they were like, "you can be in charge of it." (MOLLY and JEANNE laugh)

**JEANNE:** Well I do enjoy young people.

**MOLLY:** Right! First, can you talk to us a little bit about—I think people know most CAST Tech, but CAST Schools is a conglomerate—what do you call it?

**JEANNE:** That's funny! Conglomerate is funny. We call it a network, but I sometimes call it a constellation. (laughs)

**KIRAN:** (quietly) Ahh, that's good.

**JEANNE:** But I think we should stick with network probably.

**MOLLY:** I kind of like constellation though. Talk about CAST Schools, what is it? [\(2:47\)](#)

**JEANNE:** So, CAST Schools is a non-profit, network of what we call Partnership Schools, and that's where a lot of people get confused because our nonprofit is very small, and we partner with school districts to create innovative high schools. In one case, we are doing PreK-12, that really redefine how we do teaching and schooling. So, we are not a charter school in the traditional sense of a charter school. Although some of our high schools, and this is why people get super confused, are in-district charters. But all of our schools are partnerships with existing public-school districts. [\(3:22\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Okay, so I'm saying this to you because you are an education policy person. Let's start first, let's back up a tiny bit. Now that you've given us that, 'cause now I'm going to have you take us down like what the heck is a charter versus a partnership—

**JEANNE:** (overlapped) No, no, no, no, please don't.

**MOLLY:** I'm not going to do that just yet. You, um, the fact that you are the Executive of CAST Schools, this small nonprofit, that is a partnership with SAISD, right?

**JEANNE:** SAISD, East Central...



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**MOLLY:** Yep, most public schools, right, so it's a partnership, etc. But your background is in education. You are an education person.

**JEANNE:** I am, but I'm kind of a nontraditional education person.

**MOLLY:** That's exactly right. Tell us, it's always weird to interview your friends. Kiran, maybe you should do this and ask her questions. (KIRAN laughs) Because I know the answers to this. It's always weird to, (funny voice) "Please tell us how you got to where you are." (4:13)

**JEANNE:** Well, maybe I'll surprise you.

**MOLLY:** You won't. (BOTH laugh)

**KIRAN:** I do want to know how you got to where you are and why education?

**JEANNE:** Well, I started in education. I was a teacher. When I graduated college, I moved to New York City and was a public school teacher in New York. Then, I taught for four years, actually mostly abroad, and then I, did some other stuff, I actually went back to graduate school. I ended up going into journalism as the main thing I ended up doing. I became an education reporter and editor, so education from a different—I like to think about it as I was in the classroom. I got very frustrated with some of the systemic issues with education—

**MOLLY:** (sarcastically) I'm so glad that those are finished, that those are fixed now. (4:58)

**JEANNE:** Oh, totally resolved now. I just kind of stepped away, and they all took care of themselves. That was awesome. So, I felt sort of powerless at the time. I don't think I worked for a single administrator that I wasn't really excited to work for. That isn't to say they were awful, but there was a lot of focus on compliance. It was very hard to focus on how to make systemic change. And so then I became a reporter, where I felt like I was able to write about these systems issues and put the spotlight on education issues. And then, I at some point, thought, "okay, I am writing these stories about all these things that need to be fixed, somebody just *do* something!" (MOLLY laughs) Well, maybe I should just do something. So, I went into public policy. I worked for two Mayors who had an interest in educational policy, and said I will really carve out a role for you to do something community wide on education. So, that's sort of how I bounced around. And then, after that I went over with Molly to SA2020. That was another iteration of we are making community wide change, and even though my role at SA2020 wasn't exclusively education, that was a big part I was focused on. One of the big things we talked a lot about when I was there was issues that have this big multiplier effect. (6:24)



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**MOLLY:** Yeah. It was also education was consistently rising to the top as the number one priority in our community. Over and over again, for the last nine years, education has been number one. CAST Schools, then, I met you as a policy wonk. That hasn't changed.

**JEANNE:** That sounds so sexy. (laughs)

**MOLLY:** (laughing) I met you as a policy wonk, and today you continue to be a policy wonk.

**JEANNE:** What do you picture when you think of policy wonk? [\(6:52\)](#)

**MOLLY:** People sitting in a dark room for a podcast, that is what I picture, which is exactly what is occurring right now. Um, you came to SA2020. You left. You were doing consulting, mostly in education.

**JEANNE:** Yes, correct, and workforce actually. [\(7:08\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Yes, education and workforce. That is basically the crux of what CAST Schools is—education and workforce. Industry and education coming together.

**JEANNE:** Yeah, you can even go back to SA2020. One of the main projects I worked on at SA2020 was the Pipeline Taskforce, which was a report we did that made a bunch of recommendations. It basically asked, “what can we do to address this issue that you raised at the beginning of the podcast?” How do we—we are doing better on high school graduation, that's awesome! —but we are not seeing our kids go on to college. So, what we know about our data in San Antonio is that only about 50% of our students leaving high school -roughly- are going to college. Of those that go to college, about 80% -- these are crass numbers—they end up in the community college system. Of them, what percentage actually graduates? So, think about all the related issues. So, you have student debt, for example. You have people who don't have a degree, so they have nothing useful, potentially a few of those classes might have helped them, but that it really shows up in a way like market value, and they're paying off these debts. So, how do we address some of these issues? So, CAST was really like, we have them as a captive audience in high school, and actually one of those recommendations in the Talent Pipeline Taskforce that I still think is a really good recommendation that we never did, was how do we build like a 13<sup>th</sup> year of high school into a K-12? How do we make sure all of our kids leave high school with something that has market value? Maybe, that is a certificate or a couple marketable skill, or maybe that is a year of college—that way they can have more of a launching pad and they've saved some money as well—but how do we really put that into high school? [\(8:56\)](#)

**MOLLY:** You're not just leaving with a high school diploma, right? Which, we know now, 65% of jobs next year, basically, are going to require something beyond high school. We've known that for a minute now, so that 13<sup>th</sup> year inside high school would be important. [\(9:13\)](#)



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**JEANNE:** It would be super important. I mean, like I'm sure you guys have looked at some of the data in our community. So, take a high school I care a lot about, like Sam Houston. It was part of the Promise Zone a few years ago. They did a great job of increasing what was happening in high school, but when you looked at their data for college, those kids weren't going to college. We don't really know why. It is hard to unpack, but it could be that, that wasn't a financially viable option for them or their families. I mean, there is so many reasons it could be. But what if we built more into the high school? So, that's sort of the philosophy we apply at CAST. We've gotten them through the twelfth grade, what if we built something that is a more explicit staircase into economic mobility in the middle class of our community? What would that look like? And how do we take away the places where kids fall through the cracks? So, sort of backwards mapping them into the middle class. Let's start the focus on the high-paying jobs, places where we know employers are going to hire. Let's bring employers in agreeing to interview or hire these kids when they graduate. Let's help them create these schools, so the projects these kids are doing are both authentic – they're real—and they're things the employers want to see. They're giving them skills and competencies that matter to those employers. But also, let's put enough college and certificates into the high school so that—if you take CAST Tech, which you mentioned everyone knows. It's our flagship. It's been around the longest. Those kids are going into 11<sup>th</sup> grade starting Monday, and by their sophomore year, all of them can code in two languages. Now that's, there is *no* school in our city close to that, and that's super powerful to employers because even SA2020—

**MOLLY:** Yeah, of course! [\(11:04\)](#)

**JEANNE:** If you can hire somebody who knows how to *code*-- and we are not talking—like *real* coding languages, then they're marketable immediately. Some of our employers say, "Okay, come work for us."

**MOLLY:** Right, they're marketable at sixteen. [\(11:17\)](#)

**JEANNE:** So, they're all doing internships and all that. But take a Frost Bank, they're one of our—or Firstmark, our partners, they'll hire people who have those skills, and they'll give them—they'll pay for their college. So, I go work at Firstmark—full time, half time, whatever—and then they'll pay for the remainder of my tuition. So, I've already got two years done, and the remainder is paid for. So, we are trying to make it almost impossible for them. So, if they choose, "I don't want to do it," that's one thing. But it's never going to be something they can't financially afford now. So, yeah. We are really building schools that acknowledge the actual population in our community. [\(11:57\)](#)

**MOLLY:** You're speaking very specifically about, sort of this thing that Kiran and I consistently in front of people doing presentations, etc., and the things that consistently rises to the top when



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we are talking about education is—college is not for everyone. You just said something very specific: “We are making it basically impossible for them to not go on to college. If they choose not to—different.” And I think that’s the conversation, generally, we have is “no, no, maybe college isn’t for you *right now*,” but that’s not the conversation we want to be having. We want to be having, “It *can be* for you. It can be for *everyone*.” We want to make that path way obvious. [\(12:34\)](#)

**JEANNE:** That’s right. Let me give you another really concrete example. CAST STEM, which is our second school, is the only high school that has Advanced Manufacturing pathway that Toyota is so interested in, right. So, those students, when they graduate, can go right into Toyota. Now Toyota, also has the – I’m sure you’re familiar— with Texas Fame. They have a partnership with Alamo Colleges doing the same thing. One of the things we learned through this work because we are trying to make the maximum opportunity for our students. When you come out, you can work straight for Toyota *or* go finish your degree at a four-year college. One of the things we discovered is that if you want to finish out an engineering or business, you need a different math class, so let’s make sure we aren’t giving them an off ramp that doesn’t have the ability to lattice back and complete. So, it is good for everyone. It is good for Toyota. But then, that kid four years from now says “I want to go back and finish my engineering degree,” they don’t have to (quietly) go back and take high school or college math. It’s those things of thinking about where people are really at. Do people really do college in four- year increments? If we know, 80 or 90%, maybe something even higher of the kids at UTSA and Alamo, which is where *most* of our kids are going to school, have jobs, what are those jobs? Oh, they’re working retail. Again, not to dog retail—because we are actually about to open a retail high school as well—but let’s make those are the higher paying jobs in retail, or it is aligned with what they want to do with their career. Because if I want to be a computer scientist, and I can go work for somebody coding, there is this beautiful virtual circle between what I am learning in class and what I’m doing at work, and it all feeds on each other. [\(14:21\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Yeah, I guess my question to you is—this makes complete sense—how come not every school is doing it?

**JEANNE:** Because it is *really* hard.

**MOLLY:** What! (BOTH laughing)

**JEANNE:** Well, and you know actually, the cool thing is that we have—we are working with three school districts. We have San Antonio, Southwest and East Central. We are in conversation with two other school districts that want to participate. When we announced this model, we said we were going to do ten minimum around our city, strategically located. The school districts uniformly are interested in doing this work, but I’ll tell you the challenge is,



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when I say a *partnership*, I mean a partnership, and that is not how schools are generally set up. [\(15:09\)](#)

**MOLLY:** The word “partnership” across the board, everyone has a different definition of that that means. (JEANNE laughs)

**JEANNE:** Partnership is very hard, and I think especially for schools. I mean I don’t know how often you guys go into schools, probably a lot, but you know the first thing you experience is they probably want to take your driver’s license, and they don’t feel like welcoming places. I’m not saying we shouldn’t have security or anything like that, but our schools are set up like little mini fortresses. There isn’t this sense of porousness, like we want the community to come in, and we want the kids to go out. We are trying to break down those barriers, but that is hard for school districts and schools because that is not the way it has been done in our country. It’s been like “we got this,” and I’m not trying to pick on the school districts. It probably dates back to perception that was real in this country that school was about creating little widgets for the factory system, right? So, we didn’t want industry dictating what was happening when kids were supposed to be learning. We were afraid we were going to train them to be little automatons on the factory line. [\(16:19\)](#)

**MOLLY:** I think automatons on the factory line, and also “hey, you are going to go in here and learn something, and then you’re going to come back out of it.” My parents don’t need to be involved, or at least I’m thinking about me in school. My parents don’t need to be involved because I am taken care of inside this space for a second. [\(16:38\)](#)

**JEANNE:** I think, also, big systems like schools or any government system, the responsiveness range is very slow. There is a ten- or twenty-year lag time to get us a system to turn.

**MOLLY:** I think we are sort of seeing now, certainly a conversation around the *holistic* nature of a student, they come in *and* it is a conversation we have often at SA2020. Everything is interrelated. So, if I show up to your school, and I’m hungry, or I couldn’t get a bus, or I had to walk through mud or flooding, I’m not going to be ready to learn. [\(17:17\)](#)

**JEANNE:** Right. I think the other issue, in particular issue in Texas because we are the home to the accountability system, you get what you measure. Our state for *so long* has been focused on testing, and testing is very compliance oriented, so that has led to unintended—educators are also some of the victims of this as well. Because even to your point of I want to have a holistic focus, if you’re being held mostly to a standard of how many students of mine are going to pass this particular bar, that becomes a driving focus of everything you do. [\(17:59\)](#)

**KIRAN:** Can you paint a picture for us, I’m curious what it means for these schools to be rooted in community? Where are these schools located that are making the--?



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**JEANNE:** That's a great question, so right now, we are trying to find this happy marriage of strategically located around our community, so that there are different access points for different folks, and also near the industry clusters so that way it makes it easier for those kids to get to those internships and walk to a work experience. [\(18:32\)](#)

**MOLLY:** An example of that is CAST Tech is downtown where we've started to create a tech district.

**JEANNE:** Yeah, exactly. In fact, Tech Bloc was like, "you *must* put this school downtown." In fact, that was kind of a heavy lift because downtown is not the cheapest place or with tons of extra buildings or—

**MOLLY:** loads of parking accessible [\(18:46\)](#)

**JEANNE:** Exactly, so but they were very like, "it *has to be* downtown." And CAST STEM, the other one I mentioned is relatively close to Toyota. So, there is some other key employers, Zachary Engineering and Port San Antonio. CAST Med that is less true, although there are med systems opening on the southside. There was a real interest in providing medical education on the southside because there really isn't anything like that on that part of town. And there is a strong Health Careers on the northside, so that was a perceived *need* of that community. And our last school, CAST Lead, is similarly out in East Central. It's a little bit, it's not rural, but it is more rural feeling than other schools. But they already had some really strong programs that we thought we could build a strong industry partnership. So, on the point of where the kids are coming from, they're coming from the school districts we are partnering with. And then, from surrounding areas. We have a real commitment to equity, so we are trying to focus our outreach and recruitment on areas where we think the kids are underserved by their area schools. We've seen, we just did an analysis of where our kids are coming from at CAST Tech, and so the three schools with the largest feeder, are the three westside schools. So, they're the closest to CAST Tech, but we do have them from all over the city, like Bandera, and crazy long distances people are coming from. We are trying to be very cognizant of preserving access, especially in SAISD, focused on that bottom quadrant. But also, we really believe that heterogeneity is really important for our democracy, and for our kids, and all of that. So, we have probably a much wider range of kids in our schools than you are going to see at most other high schools in San Antonio. [\(20:44\)](#)

**MOLLY:** You're doing this--- sorry, my brain is going into like 55 different sort of spokes— (silly voice) my brain is a constellation. I was trying to do that—

**JEANNE:** (excitedly, overlapped) Just like our schools!



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**MOLLY:** (continues) as you were drinking your water, I was trying to get a spit take. (JEANNE laughs) The reason I am bringing this up, what my brain is doing right now, you've said about 15 things that I am interested in, and one of them is very specifically, that you were *very* intentionally looking at, not only, and just saying right now "we do a CAST Med on the Southside because the Northside is served by Health Careers." Like we are moving into where community needs is. We are looking at histories, looking at challenges. We are looking at community needs and then setting up our schools in that way. There is such intentionality behind that, right. I am curious because school districts, I am assuming, the schools exist, that there is a difference between finding buildings and also being very intentional about we want to set up here. How does that get funded?

**JEANNE:** That's not the route I thought you were going. (Laughs) [\(21:57\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Well, I'm going that route because I am saying, there is such an intentionality behind it that you're partnering with industry, that you're making sure that your serving community needs, and what we consistently hear again and again and again all the time, every time we speak about this, is that there is infinite need and finite resources. You keep cropping up brand new schools (JEANNE laughs), what's happening? What are we seeing? Is it because the outcomes are there? People are participating.

**JEANNE:** That's an interesting question. It's a good question. It's definitely a big macro-question.

**MOLLY:** I mean, that's where we live. [\(22:30\)](#)

**JEANNE:** Yeah, so I think partly we are bringing some additional money to the table because there is philanthropy behind us. But, you know all of our schools are going into existing buildings that are being repurposed. So, that eliminates some of the major costs. So, our proposition to school districts if you will is: we will partner with you, but you need to find us a facility. So, most of our facilities are not the most attractive on first blush. The CAST Tech facility had literally been moth-balled for 50 years, and it had a nuclear bomb shelter in the basement. All of the vocational supplies had been stuffed in there.

**MOLLY:** (laughing) What! Where are you?

**KIRAN:** What just happened? (laughs)

**JEANNE:** So yeah, we had to completely start from scratch. And so, similarly, CAST STEM is going into Southwest, a building they used original high school, then it was an elementary school, and it has just incubated different things over the years. It's going to need an upgrade,



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too. So, that's a way—and you've probably seen over the last couple of years school districts repurposing schools for a variety of things.

**MOLLY:** Yeah! [\(23:51\)](#)

**JEANNE:** There is some space, as some people move and shift, and neighborhoods change, where there are buildings that can be repurposed. So, that's the first part of your question, I think. The second part is where the money is coming from, right? [\(24:07\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Yeah, you're seeing some investment in this. And I'm like what? Why? I just keeping thinking about how our education system is broken. We keep saying it over and over and over again. We are not delivering to young people the things that they need in order to succeed moving forward. We keeping hearing over time, 34% of our population has a college degree. We are not moving students from high school into college or certificate programs. I'm like, there is a clear investment in CAST Schools, that we are not seeing in our public schools' system. I am like, what can we glean from, that you're doing.

**JEANNE:** I think we need to unpack that a little. The money that we are getting operationally is the dollars follows students. So, there is not enough funding in Texas, that is true per pupil. That is a true statement. And yet, if you can create a school, and you can get a facility, and you get enough students to go to that school, the money follows the students. So, you get that per pupil funding, and you just have to use it as effectively as you can. We have also tapped into some additional state funding. There are other things we have done to augment our funding streams, but I think there is maybe a question to—there's a big Texas school funding issue which is problematic, and I think on the latest improvement, things that happened last legislative session also mask the long-term crisis that we are facing in our state. They were sort of short-term fixes that bought us some time. But then, there is this other issue of comprehensive high schools and are they really serving today's kids, right? And one of the biggest challenges, not just for us, but for charters, and magnets, they actually so out-perform, the kids who go to these schools, it's a general statement, not every one of these schools, but small-focused schools where kids are not a number, and are having a time to really dig into something they're interested in, they generally out-perform comprehensive high schools. But we have a lot of nostalgia in our community and in our country around the comprehensive high school experience—I was a hornet, I was a dragon, I was a whatever, whatever, and I want my kid to be. And I shouldn't pick on those school districts because they're doing CAST, but when we go out recruiting, we hear that a lot from parents and students, or I want to play football. And yet, if you look at sort of the academic experience, and again it is not true across the board, some kids are doing really well at the comprehensives—particularly the top 10 kids are doing well at comprehensive—sometimes the student-athletes, the band members, but for a lot of those kids, they are getting a little bit lost in that system. And is the comprehensive high school really going to solve for most of the kids in this community? [\(27:01\)](#)



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**MOLLY:** Yeah, I mean, again, right. You're saying something that's very specific which is, "how are we meeting the needs of kids?" And I don't know that we, I'm not hearing from you that, "oh, schools are bad." Right, I know we are saying generalizations, but it's also just the idea around, are we meeting our community in the needs that they have? Are we saying that if our ultimate outcome is, "this student will be successful adult," whatever we define successful adult to be or that kid defines successful adult, are we giving them the resources that they need to get there? And in some cases, it's shifting.

**KIRAN:** Yeah. And to be sure, we know you mentioned equity earlier. We know as a buzzword, and at the same time it's exactly what you are describing, and it's what Molly is describing in meeting the needs and histories of the folks that call this community home. There is a space around, "yes to education and workforce," and there's something in the way that you're speaking about young people. It's about recognizing young people as leaders. We had a chance to talk to some students from CAST Schools earlier this year – actually last year—when the 2018 Impact Report was released in January. There was a student who said, "we are not just creating papier-mâché volcanoes at school, we are solving real problems in San Antonio and Bexar County." And you also spoke a little bit about sort of how different the learning curricula is, and I'm curious to learn more about, what does it even mean to shift the culture for students to show up to an institution that is recognizing them as leaders? [\(28:39\)](#)

**JEANNE:** That's a really great and important point. I mean we sort of have these design pillars, and they're kind of abstract, but one of them is student voice and choice. That is probably the one that speaks the most to me, and that I spent most of my career focused on. This idea of how do we, how do we just ask the kids what works for them?

**MOLLY:** (pretend shocked) *What!* That's crazy! (JEANNE laughs)

**JEANNE:** That's sort of my guiding principle. (ALL laugh and overlapped chatter) If I had to say one idea that I've been pursuing for the last 30 years. So when we started these schools, we did focus groups with students and families on everything, from what physically what kind of building would you want to go to school in, to what kind of projects, and continue to do that. And we've sort of developed internally what is the CAST promise to kids. So, we go back, and we ask. We told you we were going to do this, are we doing it? Is there something else that you want? I'll give you an example just from CAST and ALA, which are two of our campuses that are on the Fox Tech campus this year. So, a student wrote a note to the principals saying, "Hey! I love that there is a campus with all these schools, but we aren't really integrating. How can we do more to integrate the student experience?" So, they brought the students together, and they're working together on a student-led, "how do we integrate our campuses more?" So, that's the kind of thing we really want to foster. A different example, I mean we are about student voice, but we are also about teacher voice. One of our core philosophies also at our schools--



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**MOLLY:** Again, *What!* (30:17)

**JEANNE:** (continues) Crazy stuff! I know so revolutionary! So, hire really great leaders, so our principals and surround them by really great educators, and then get out of their way. Ask them what they need. Don't tell them the boxes they have to check. We don't seek conformity at our schools. In fact, a lot of what has happened in education is this sense of, "if we are behind in English, we should go to our English classes and make sure they're on the same page at the same time." Like that's how we are going to raise our scores. And that's not our philosophy at all. It's about customizing. So, we had a teacher, Belinda Medadine, who um, she was doing more web design/ digital media course work. This actually ties back to SA2020 in a funny way. So, her students she had them do Glassdoor research on what were the jobs that would come out of this pathway, and they came to her, "Hey, we were looking at this UX thing pays way better than web design." She was like, "what's UX?" So, anyway, they researched it together. The students really did it, and they ended up changing the whole pathway. And now I am hoping to hire the students to redesign our CAST Network website. So, we are really trying to make it—

**MOLLY:** Perfect! (31:34)

**JEANNE:** Yeah! Walk the walk. So, that's exciting. The person who was one of their mentors was Claire! (laughs) from SA2020!!

**MOLLY:** (sing- song voice) Claire from SA2020!

**JEANNE:** I was like, full circle!

**MOLLY:** That's so good! Well, so we like to always in these podcasts to people who come to give us a call to action. Anyone can apply, like any student can apply in any school district or community to apply for this. How much does it cost? I'm just asking—

**JEANNE:** FREE! (MOLLY AND JEANNE laugh)

**MOLLY:** It's really free! What is your call to action for somebody listening to the podcast? What would you say? Do this. (32:12)

**JEANNE:** Ask the kids! (Laughs)

**MOLLY:** Excellent, can we just make that the hashtag forever? Hashtag Ask the Kids.

**KIRAN:** You just won! Well done.



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**MOLLY:** (laughs) Yeah! How easy that was. Um, Jeanne Russel, thanks for being here.

**JEANNE:** You're welcome, thank you for having me. [\(32:26\)](#)

**MOLLY:** Talking about it, you came up in our previous podcast because we had our interns on, and Audrey, who is our intern because we have lovingly scooped her up, speaks *only* good things about you.

**JEANNE:** I love Audrey so much.

**MOLLY:** You're her person forever.

**JEANNE:** She's my person, too.

**MOLLY:** I know. She is enjoyable!

**JEANNE:** She is.

**MOLLY:** We are keeping her around. We've roped her in.

**JEANNE:** I know. Thank you for giving her a fun and meaningful place to work.

**MOLLY:** I mean to be fair, she's giving us meaningful, brilliant work. [\(32:53\)](#)

**JEANNE:** It works out!

**MOLLY:** So, thanks for being here! This is The Story Goes. Again, a collaborative podcast between SA2020 and KLRN. You can view everything at [klrn.org/thestorygoes](http://klrn.org/thestorygoes), and we typically we will end with a random whisper, and I feel like the only thing we could whisper together would be—

**ALL:** (whispering) Ask the kids! (JEANNE laughs) [\(33:15\)](#)



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