

### Fostering Success at Bridge Boston

Jon was having trouble at kindergarten when recess ended and it was time to leave the playground: He was disruptive, acting out, and not listening to his teachers. Jon’s mom, Sylvia, wasn’t sure how to help her son.

For young children, transitions can be challenging: They are one of the *Predictable Challenges* parents explored last fall in a workshop series of the same name at Bridge Boston Charter School in Dorchester. In one workshop, Sylvia learned that she could communicate better with her young child by showing him empathy but that she still needed to be firm about rules. Sylvia saw a change when she shared with Jon how frustrated she feels about having only 30 minutes to eat lunch at work. By modeling how even adults must follow rules they may not like, she helped Jon improve his behavior at school. You make these small parenting victories happen every day—when parents learn practical strategies to help their children achieve, you are giving them a strong start toward success.

The series was part of Families First’s *School Success* initiative. Through *School Success*, Families First empowers the parents of school-age children to support academic success. To reach the most vulnerable families, we partner with school districts and schools like Bridge Boston, many with significant populations of homeless and newcomer families. With your support, we are excited to continue this partnership and offer additional series that help and support Bridge Boston parents.

*Families First is grateful to the Anne & Paul Marcus Family Foundation for underwriting this series.*



Photo: Courtesy, Bridge Boston Charter School

### The Antidote to Early Stress: Parents

We all want our children to have strong character, but what does that mean? In his recent best-selling book, *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough makes the case for focusing not only on strengthening cognitive skills in children, but also on building traits like resilience, grit, curiosity, and zest. Along with strong attachment to a caring adult or parent, building these character traits levels the playing field for children living in poverty. Through your support, you empower parents in vulnerable communities to secure this attachment and strengthen family relationships. In doing so, you increase the odds of success for children.

**“There is a particularly effective antidote to the ill effects of early stress, and it comes not from pharmaceutical companies or early-childhood educators but from parents. Parents and other caregivers who are able to form close, nurturing relationships with their children can foster resilience in them that protects them from many of the worst effects of a harsh early environment.” —Paul Tough, *How Children Succeed***

Photo: ©2012 Allan E. Dines



Paul Tough addresses the Fathers’ Breakfast.

## Facebook- Help us reach our goal of 500 likes!

**Parenting Tip: “Discover and affirm your child’s strengths. Not every child will be a great student, athlete, or performer, but every child has qualities that make him or her special.”**

This is a great reminder that children come with different temperaments. You provide the parents we serve with an understanding of this fact and with techniques for honoring children’s unique qualities. **Like us on Facebook** and you’ll get parenting tips and the latest parenting articles.

Visit [www.families-first.org](http://www.families-first.org) and click the Facebook icon.



## Helping Schools Put Families First



**A** school open house in October, a spaghetti dinner in April—these amount to “random acts” of family engagement. Research shows parental involvement helps children do better in school, but is getting parents to show up at an open house enough? As schools strive to close the achievement gap, real partnerships with parents are crucial. With many area parents from diverse cultural and language backgrounds, however, many schools are struggling to build these relationships.

From Families First’s bilingual capacity to our expertise in training professionals, you have already supported the building blocks of an initiative to meet this emerging need. But to launch the *Family Engagement Initiative*, a coordinator with a strong background in family engagement was critical. We found her in parenting educator Magda Rodriguez (pictured). With your support and several grants, we were able to bring Magda on full time as Family Engagement Coordinator.

Previously, Magda developed a successful family engagement program for Tenacity. Before moving to the U.S., she was a lawyer in her native Columbia. A mother of two, Magda is passionate about supporting parents and students. We’re excited that she has joined us and look forward to updating you on this important work. Together we will build a *Family Engagement Initiative* that will help hundreds of parents and children get the best out of their schools.



## FASHION PROJECT

### Fashion for Families First

**S**pring cleaning is right around the corner—time to clean out your closet for a good cause!

You can make a real difference by donating your gently used women’s clothing and accessories to Fashion Project—an online retailer whose proceeds benefit Families First. Visit our website at [www.families-first.org](http://www.families-first.org) to learn how to donate!

## Our Turn to Say Thank You

**Y**ou’ve made a difference in the lives of children, families, and communities. Join us for the 1st Annual Generous Donor Thank You Event on May 23, an evening—open to donors of \$500 or more—celebrating you and the supporters who make our work possible.

Please contact Susannah Cintron at [scintron@families-first.org](mailto:scintron@families-first.org) or 617-868-7687 x24 for more information.

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PARENTING PROGRAMS

99 Bishop Allen Drive  
Cambridge, MA 02132  
617.868.7687

[www.families-first.org](http://www.families-first.org)