I think about the young lady who would show up to school in tears when she started the TCP in the spring, because she was late again after having to get her very difficult kindergarten-age brother ready in the morning. By the end of her ten-week session, she was always on time because, at the TCP team's urging, her parents had finally taken on the task of getting her younger siblings to school.

This June, approximately 150 TCP graduates attended the First Lady's reception with their parents and received Governor's Citations for their "outstanding moral character." But it was not just the students who changed. For example, one of schools had serious problems keeping records regarding student tardies. As a result of a judge's consistent prodding, school administrators began tracking every tardy so they could correctly address students' needs.

Of course, for grantors, government agencies, and other CFCC partners, the hard data - the numbers - are critically important. In order to track the TCP's overall "big picture" success and improve the program, CFCC analyzes attendance figures and collects survey data as part of its formal evaluation procedure. CFCC measures the students' performance while they are still in the program, in order to determine who will "graduate." CFCC also compares a TCP student's attendance during the ten weeks before they begin the program, the ten weeks when they participate in the program, and the ten weeks after the TCP ends. For the 2009-2010 school year, the results have been remarkable.

During 2009-2010, the majority of TCP students across Maryland graduated from the program, meaning they reduced their number of unexcused absences and tardies by 75% or more and displayed improved behavior and academics. In the fall of 2009, 91 out of one 140 participating students (65%) in the ten TCP schools graduated from TCP. This striking success for the majority of students continued into the spring of 2010, when 87 out of 164 (53%) students participating in Truancy Court Program sessions in twelve TCP schools graduated from the program.

In 2009-2010, the TCP operated successfully in nine elementary and middle schools and one high school in the fall and eleven elementary and middle schools and one high school in the spring. The elementary and middle school students participating in the nine Maryland TCP schools in the fall of 2009 saw a 64 percent decrease in unexcused absences during the program, as compared with their attendance in spring 2009. Our TCP graduates maintained their excellent attendance records in Spring 2010, with a 67 percent decrease in unexcused absences, as compared to their spring 2009 attendance.

An historic blizzard kept most Maryland schools closed for over a week last winter, and road and walkway conditions continued to be treacherous well after the schools reopened. Nevertheless, the students participating in the spring 2010 TCP program at twelve Maryland schools also improved their attendance significantly. The preliminary data showed that, despite weather-related challenges, those students decreased their absences by 43 percent during their participation in the TCP, as compared to the ten weeks before they began the program. They were able to maintain and build on those gains after the TCP ended, with an average 47 percent reduction in absences when comparing attendance before and after they participated in the TCP.

These statistics are enormously significant when determining the TCP's effectiveness, but they nevertheless tell only part of the story. In order to supplement its data analysis, CFCC has administered a pre and post-participation questionnaire to TCP students to determine the program's impact on school-related attitudes and perceptions.

Highlights include:

* Three-quarters of the students surveyed reported that their parents or guardians asked more often about their day at school during or after they participated in the TCP than they had prior to the program.
Half of the students showed an improved confidence in their ability to complete their homework.
The students' positive perceptions of whether their teachers cared about them increased.
The students indicated that their parents helped them more often with their homework during and after their involvement with the TCP.

The parents seemed to agree with their children about the TCP's impact. One parent noted that, by coming to TCP sessions she "was able to show my daughter that we were on the same page and also that we were all here to support her." Parents described some of the more positive changes that they saw in their children resulting from the TCP: preparing clothes the night before school, getting up earlier, becoming more responsible, showing more excitement about school, and demonstrating greater motivation. All parents said that the program helped get their children to school every day, on time, and that they would recommend the TCP to other parents and schools.

Andrea Bento, TCP Manager