

## *The TCP's Ancillary Arts Education Programs Successfully Improve Attendance and School Engagement (continued)*

School administrators from both participating schools reported positive results from the program. They noted that participating students were able to choose from a variety of roles and responsibilities, that the program helped provide the tools and language for students to express and explore themselves and their environment, and that participation in the program improved the students' understanding of what was taught in the classroom. Further, participating students were surveyed after completing the program. The majority indicated that they would rate the program as excellent or very good, that they liked participating in the program, that the experience helped them in school, that they liked school more and attended more often after the program, and that they learned something new in Kids and the Arts.

A review of the students' attendance data found substantial differences in attendance during and after the TCP between those students who participated in the Kids and the Arts program and those who did not. Of the nine students who participated in both the Spring 2013 TCP session and the Kids and the Arts program, eight graduated from the TCP (89 percent and meaning that they reduced their unexcused absences and tardies by 65%). They reduced their number of unexcused absences by an average of 41 percent during their involvement in both programs and improved their attendance even further during the six weeks following their participation in both programs, averaging 68 percent fewer absences after the program than during an equivalent period of time prior to program participation. This is in sharp contrast to the 19 students who participated only in the Spring TCP from the same schools, who reduced their absences by 20 percent – half that of the students who participated in the TCP and Kids and the Arts program – and experienced a slight dip in attendance after the program.

Based on both the attendance and survey data, it was evident that the Kids and the Arts program increased students' self-confidence and engagement in school and led to increases in attendance. Given the great increase in attendance for students who participated in both programs, we at CFCC recommend that attendance interventions and policies include opportunities for students to be engaged actively in school-based enrichment activities like CFCC's Kids and the Arts and Kids and Theater programs. CFCC will continue to seek funding opportunities for enrichment programs that can operate alongside the TCP in order to achieve the greatest – and most enduring – changes possible for students struggling with school attendance.