Chris remembers finishing the program he could “actually do well in mathematics.” For giving him the confidence to know that, he is thankful to his teaching staff from that summer. He attributes a huge increase in his mathematics confidence and achievement to summer at Math Plus Summer Academy, and he attributes a significant part of his five-year college plan, which consists of a commitment to completing a designated number of community service hours. As a result of his hard work and perseverance on all of the ways that Summer Academy had helped him to get where he is today.

Chris says that, for one thing, the beautiful Northeastern campus really “caught [his] interest” when he attended Summer Academy. It is certainly our intent that taking tours of some of the plentiful Boston-area institutions of higher education and organizing field trips and projects that present career path opportunities.

The Torch Scholarship is one of many that fall under the umbrella of the Civic Engagement Program (CEP) at Northeastern. MathPOWER has worked closely with CEP for years, and many of our Math*STARS volunteer tutor-mentors come to us through CEP. Chris has already devoted many hours of his young life to service, and he is now happy to be able to do so as a steward of Northeastern.

Jimenez hopes to make MathPOWER a significant part of his five-year plan, and we are thrilled that Chris’s path has brought him to us after all these years. In fact, in another funny twist of fate, the Site Director at Math*STARS/Yawkey, Massachusets Promise Fellow Stephanie Loneck, was the teaching assistant in Chris’s Summer Academy class back in 2009, when she herself was a student at Northeastern. We are proud of the varied and impressive accomplishments of all our driven tutors, but Chris’s success holds a special place in our hearts. He personifies so much of what we hope to empower students to become, and, what is more, he is driven to inspire others to follow his footsteps. We wish Jimenez the very best and are so glad that we will be witness to his greatness for years to come.

The only club that all students are required to take part in is College and Careers, the linchpin in our summer-long effort to get middle school youth thinking about college and next steps. College and Careers takes students on tours of some of the plentiful Boston-area institutions of higher education and organizes field trips and projects that present career path opportunities. There is an emphasis on variety throughout the summer, on introducing kids to the idea that not all college experiences will be the same, and on getting the youth thinking about what criteria are important to them. I was therefore eager to ask Mr. Jimenez why he eventually chose to attend Northeastern.

From his very first moments as an undergraduate at Northeastern University, Chrismelin Jimenez was making a name for himself. In fact, he left such an impression on those who heard him speak at freshman orientation that Chris’s words reached us before we even realized our connection to the well-spoken young man. It was only after Mr. Jimenez volunteered as a tutor-mentor at our Math*STARS/Yawkey afterschool program, bringing our relationship full-circle, that we understood the extent to which Chris personifies the impact that we hope to have on all the young people we serve. Our Special Projects Manager Teri Hatch sat down with Chris to discuss academics, his transition from middle to high school, his time with MathPOWER at our Algebra Plus Summer Academy, and how all of that influenced the man he is today.

Chris Jimenez was born and raised in Boston, moving between the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and Hyde Park, and eventually graduating from Cristo Rey Boston High School. Chris remembers that even prior to middle school, he had struggled with math. He was unable to understand material at a quick pace, Jimenez says, and began to fall further behind in middle school as word problems introduced another dimension of confusion. Chris laments that he studied hard and even stayed late to receive extra support from teachers, but that “A” in mathematics eluded him throughout middle school.

During the summer between his eighth and ninth grade years, Chris attended Algebra Plus Summer Academy, and he attributes a huge increase in his confidence and quantitative skill to this formative summer before the start of high school. Chris remembers feeling very intimidated by the pre-test that the students all receive on the first day of Summer Academy, and he says that he worried after the test that it “was going to be the worst summer of [his] life.” Jimenez soon realized, though, that there was more than enough support at Summer Academy, and he thanks his teaching staff from that summer for giving him the confidence to know that he could “actually do well in mathematics.” Chris remembers finishing the program strong, feeling truly ready to take on high school math.

Algebra Plus Summer Academy runs every summer, for five weeks, at Northeastern University. Students entering sixth through tenth grade have the opportunity to participate in interactive math review and enrichment activities for four hours in the morning, and they then move on to “clubs” that they have chosen from a long list of options. “Clubs” span the range from basketball to jewelry-making to rocketry, and they take Summer Academy students all over the Northeastern University campus and to other destinations throughout Boston.