

Spring 2024 • Northfield Middle School



St. Olaf College Senior Jose Gonzalez Ramirez, center, talks with NMS TORCH students about his college experiences.



St. Olaf College Senior and TORCH alumna Angie Oscar Orrego

Futures Day at St. Olaf

TORCH took 38 eighth grade students to St. Olaf College on Feb. 23 for “8th Grade Futures” workshop day. Students learned about high school graduation requirements, college admissions requirements, and postsecondary options. We encouraged students to envision their future paths and consider the necessary steps to achieve their goals.

Students also met with Tessa Kiesow and Karissa Caddy from the high school TORCH team, reassuring them that TORCH support continues beyond middle school. In addition to the informative sessions, students explored key campus locations, including the TRIO Student Support Services office, the cafeteria, and two college dorms. We are so grateful to our college volunteers and TORCH alumni who helped make this possible!

NMS TORCH Stats

We have served 160 students so far this year, and we have had 3,586 touchpoints with students.

Below is the breakdown of our contacts:

30.8%

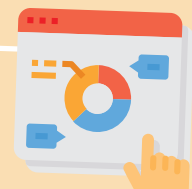
Academic Advising: Helping students figure out their grades, missing assignments, courses to take, college/career conversations

31.5%

Tutoring: Assisting students with classwork or homework

35.5%

Social Emotional Well-Being: Mentoring students through personal situations, providing transportation, etc.



Alumni Spotlight

Several TORCH alumni have volunteered at NMS TORCH this year, including three St. Olaf College students who will graduate in May: **Jose Gonzalez Ramirez**, a chemistry major who plans to become an optometrist; **Athziri Marcial Rodriguez**, a biology major who plans to study genetics, cellular biology, or microbiology; and **Angie Oscar Orrego**, a Spanish major who is interested in marketing. All three said they have enjoyed tutoring the middle school students and exposing them to college and career possibilities.

Oscar Orrego said she’s especially enjoyed helping students—including her younger sister and her cousins—get excited about math.

“The people in TORCH are the whole reason I’m in college and am graduating. Volunteering is my own way to give back—I don’t have money, but I can give back with my time,” she said.

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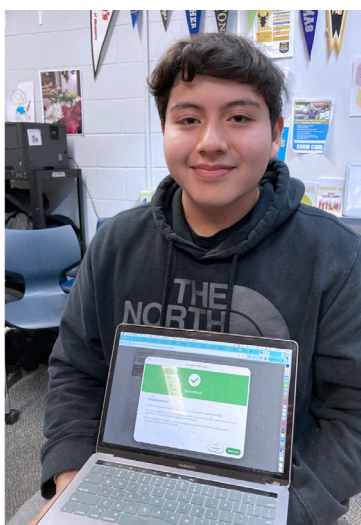
High School TORCH has served a total of **226 students** so far this year. These students have had over **4,800 contacts** with TORCH staff and volunteers. Our touchpoints with students include **2,526** academic and future planning conversations, and **2,220** social-emotional conversations.

We are busy this spring helping seniors apply for college if they haven't already done so. It's also the time when seniors apply for scholarships and get help to understand their financial aid awards.



Tax Help & Driver's Education

At this point in the school year, we have provided scholarships for 24 students to access driver's education and/or behind-the-wheel training, and free tax help for **TORCH** students to file their taxes if they worked in 2023. So far, we have helped students file for over **\$3,400 in refunds**, with an average refund of **\$600 per student!**



Senior Erick Murillo submitted his Common App in January!

So far, **TORCH** seniors have been accepted to several University of Minnesota campuses, Winona State University, St. Olaf, Augsburg, and Gustavus! Seniors have also applied to technical and community colleges including Dakota County Technical College, South Central College, Normandale Community College, and St. Cloud Technical & Community College.



11th grader Valeria De La Torre was excited to do her taxes with TORCH for the first time this spring.

The mission of TORCH is to support and empower students in graduating from high school and pursuing future goals, with an intentional focus on partnering with students of color, youth from low-income families and first-generation college attendees.

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