

Marvin Vargas has always loved mathematics and wants to be a math teacher, a way, he says, to give back everything Palatine teachers have given him. Next January Marvin will graduate from Northern Illinois University with an education degree with a concentration in mathematics. He credits EB 211, his mentor, Cesar Bonilla, and all those caring District 15 and 211 teachers for helping this first generation college student toward that goal.

"I don't think I could have gotten through all the challenges I encountered without EB 211," observed Marvin. "They provided financial assistance for books, among other things, and that was big. And the confidence Cesar handed me, that helped *my* confidence and helped me continue."

Cesar, an accountant with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and Marvin discovered they had much in common: both were the first in their families to go to college, both were rabid soccer fans and their parents are from same area in Mexico. Because Cesar had also attended NIU, he was able to help Marvin navigate that university system.

"I was in his shoes 10 – 12 years ago. I had to figure things out on my own in college, and I remember all the questions I had, as well as the need for someone to guide me," recalled Cesar.

A Golden Apple Scholar, Marvin is involved in summer workshops focusing on classroom management, inquiry-based classes, and hands-on teaching opportunities. When he graduates, he'll teach at least five years in low-income schools.

"This could not have happened without this type of support, from Cesar and others at EB211," Marvin said. "It felt like a family: everyone wanted to help everyone, everyone encouraging us. I am so very grateful."