**Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.**

The greatest barrier that I have faced was in grade 9, when I reached Java in my Computer Science syllabus. At that time, my school had no teacher for the course and the curriculum was not well-developed. Instead of being proactive, the young me spent no effort trying to learn it. Before I knew it, I was in grade 10 and a new teacher finally came. He was not well-versed in Java, and was more of a specialist in C++. Although the unstructured nature of the class required us to self-study, I could not keep up with the curriculum pace. I failed the mid-semester test and realized that it was a wake-up-call. I asked my friends for help, but they, too, were struggling. So, I read the textbook over and over, until I knew how Java worked as a compiler and the theory behind it. I also found a Youtube channel, Thenewboston, where I learned how to code. Instead of just reading and watching videos on how to code, I decided to install a Java IDE called BlueJ on my computer to practice what I’ve learned.

Months of intense self-learning led me to do programs that most of my classmates could not, and the few who could, were my close friends. These friends and I constantly studied together outside of class, and we kept pushing the boundaries of our abilities, and ameliorated our algorithms. We became adept at coding and could solve virtually any problem that our teacher threw at us. The best part of it all was that these questions involved the use of complicated logic. The exhilaration I got from solving the toughest questions from the syllabus was unearthly. It started off as a small spark, but my passion for coding was burning at this point. I enjoyed coding so much that it never felt like work, and I found myself in a state of “flow”.

In summer 2017, I pursued challenging projects that went beyond what the curriculum covered. This perpetual hunger for improvement and the enjoyment I got from coding put me in a positive reinforcement loop that pushed me to learn even more. Looking back at this whole episode, I concluded that we cannot control our surroundings but we can control our attitudes, and in this case it turned my barrier into an opportunity for me to discover my passion for coding.