

Like many things in life, there wasn't only one specific person who impacted my education experience. I was influenced by many different small factors that added up to create a positive learning experience. However, there was one person without whom, my education would've been drastically different. This person is my teacher, who also happens to be my dad, Tommy Gossard.

I live in Cooper Landing, a very small town with only around 300 year-round residents, and a K-12 school with only 10-20 students. For most of my time there, my dad was the only teacher. Because of this, middle school and high school students at Cooper Landing School took most of their classes online with classrooms at other schools through Polycom or Skype (or more recently, Zoom). I was taking online classes even before it became common during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Without the dedication of my teacher in arranging my classes with various instructors in larger schools, as well as providing me with the necessary equipment to participate remotely, I wouldn't have received the high-quality education I did. My teacher went above and beyond, and not only for me, but for many other students as well.

My teacher also was one of the big reasons I became interested in computer science and programming. He gave me the opportunity in elementary and middle school to use simple block programming languages like code.org and Scratch. He also put in a lot of work to allow Cooper Landing School to have a First Lego League team where our team

and I made and programmed a Lego robot. Both of these experiences started off my journey as a programmer and gave me the motivation and skills to improve further.

Through the Web Engineering Occupational Endorsement Certificate program at Prince William Sound College, I challenged myself more by learning programming languages like C, a general-purpose programming language created in 1972 that many newer languages are based on. This course and programming language gave me a broader understanding of programming as a whole, which has allowed me to use many different languages and tools to accomplish a variety of tasks for many different purposes.

I want to pursue a career as a software developer. This will allow me to turn my passion for making tools into a job where I can make money doing the things I love. Earning a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science will be one step toward pursuing my desired career as well as reaching my personal goal of becoming an able programmer and learning more about computer science.

One of the more surprising opportunities that programming has provided me with is social opportunities. Because of where I grew up, I didn't have the chance to meet very many people my age. Every year, I was either the only one in my grade or there was one other student. This, combined with the size of my town, resulted in me having very few friends growing up.

Programming has given me the opportunity to contribute to an open-source project on GitHub for the past seven months. GitHub is a platform for hosting open-source projects that allows many developers to easily contribute to the same project. Through this project, I've been able to meet many other programmers who have not only been good friends but have also taught me a lot.

Learning about computer science and programming has been really helpful for me. It's taught me how to solve problems and also led to some unexpected friendships. From starting with simple projects to aiming for a career in software development, it's been a journey full of learning and connecting with others. Overall, it's shown me that programming isn't just about coding – it can also provide a chance to grow and build relationships, too. Thanks to the efforts of my dad and teacher, I gained valuable skills and a passion for learning that continues today.