



Olivia Bates

High school: Knoxville High School

Hometown: Knoxville, Ill.

Major: Elementary education

Activities: Cheerleading

Internship: Student teaching – 1st grade, Rock Island Center for Math and Science

Post-grad plans: Teach 2nd grade at Hedding Grade School in Abingdon, Ill.

“Olivia is prepared to embrace the many rewards and challenges of teaching. She has stepped beyond the boundaries of the traditional education major by participating in the Number Sense Project and completing her Reading Teacher Endorsement. Olivia understands that in order to make a difference in the lives of students, she must create meaningful pathways for a variety of learners. I am confident that her calm and direct ways of meeting student needs will leave a long-lasting impact on those children fortunate enough to walk through her classroom door.”

— Dr. Deb Bracke, associate professor, education

Why Augustana?

From my very first visit, I felt so welcomed by the faculty. Everyone I interacted with showed that they cared about me not only as a student, but as a person. I felt as though I could succeed and grow academically and personally during my time here.

Are you where you thought you'd be when you first came to campus?

Honestly no! I have changed so much as a person and student. The classes and experiences I have had challenged me in ways that allowed me to grow exponentially in a way I could have never imagined.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

The professors in the education department have really helped me see my potential to be successful. They ask questions that challenge my thinking in a way that allows me to think beyond what is expected.

My cooperating teacher [for student teaching] has been a tremendous help in developing me as an educator. She never stops believing in me and my ability to become an amazing educator.

Peak experience?

My peak experience would be my time as a student teacher. I was able to grow into the type of teacher I looked up to when I was in elementary school. Student teaching was an experience that allowed me to become the person I had always wanted to be.

What surprised you?

I was surprised by how much I learned about myself! There were so many opportunities for me to grow as a student inside and outside the classroom.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I had hoped to use my Augie Choice for a study abroad experience, but with the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to do that.

What will you miss the most?

The friendships I have created. I will miss getting to see the people I have grown so close with over the past four years every day.

Advice for the Class of 2026?

Make the most of your time here! You are in charge of the experiences you have and the people you surround yourself with. Do not be afraid to ask questions or ask for support whether it is needed inside or outside the classroom. The people here truly do want to see you succeed.