



Abby Grafe

High school: Deerfield High School

Hometown: Deerfield, Ill.

Major: Elementary education

Activities: Zeta Phi Kappa sorority, Epsilon Sigma Alpha service sorority, Club Ed

Internships: Student teacher at Denkmann Elementary School in Rock Island, Ill.; special events intern with Augustana's CORE

Post-grad plans: Teach elementary school in the Quad Cities

“Abby works to improve the lives of others both in her personal and professional life. She connects with people where they are and helps them get to where they want to go. Abby does an amazing job of anticipating needs and is always willing to go the extra mile. This dedication and work ethic have been a huge part of her work in CORE and will continue after graduation. I have complete confidence that Abby will be a successful, positive influence as an elementary education teacher.”

— Beth Ford, FYI 101 instructor and CORE career coach

Why Augustana?

When I was looking at different schools, I never had that initial “this is it!” feeling. As I was visiting different campuses, I was learning what I wanted out of a college. Augustana gave me all of those opportunities and more. I just felt it in my gut that Augie was where I needed to be.

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

Yes and no. Since I was 5, I've known I wanted to be a teacher. Going through the education program at Augie definitely helped me solidify that. In the sense of a career and post-grad plans, no I'm not surprised. What I am surprised with is how confident I am leaving Augustana. I feel like I am prepared for “the real world” way more than I could have ever believed. I am much more confident overall than when I came to Augustana.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

There are so many people who have helped me get to where I am, and I can't thank them enough.

First, I want to thank everyone at CORE: Keri, Jessica, Beth, Lisa, Laura and everyone else in the office have been a huge support for me. I have worked in CORE since freshman year, and the staff has become family to me. They see me every single day, and have been with me through my best and worst days, and every day in between.

Additionally, the education department has taught me so much, and helped shape me into the teacher I am, and will continue to be. All the professors have such a passion for what they do, and have a way of pushing you to be the best teacher you can be.

My advisor, Randy, has been a huge support. He is so understanding and supportive of whatever you need. Randy has made me think about teaching in ways I never had before, and pushed me to be my best. He also knows me as a student, and will help me with whatever I need, whether or not it's directly related to class.

Peak experience?

My peak experience was student teaching at Denkmann Elementary School. I had always been excited to student teach, but my student teaching experience was even better than I could have ever imagined. The teachers and staff at Denkmann welcomed me with open arms, and have shown me what an amazing teacher looks like!

What surprised you?

What most surprised me was how much people care about you. At Augustana, you are NOT another number or statistic. Faculty at Augie are so accepting and understanding about your needs and celebrate your accomplishments with you. All of the employees care about you and your success, and some will even move mountains to help you succeed.

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2022

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

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How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice for student teaching.

What will you miss the most?

It's cliché, but I will miss the people and the community of Augustana the most. There are so many people whose offices I can pop into and chat with at any time. Augie is small enough that any time I was walking through the Quad, I would see someone I know and talk to them. I will miss being able to run into people and just chat. It's a feeling that I don't think I'll be able to experience anywhere else.

Advice for the Class of 2026?

Ask for help! College is a learning curve, and you grow a lot, but that doesn't come without struggle. There are so many resources on campus — use them! They're there for you. Asking for help can be hard, but I promise that it's worth it.