

MATH 391: Teaching and Learning Mathematics in the Elementary School
Section 1 | Spring 2026 Syllabus

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What’s in the Syllabus?				
<i>Click the titles of each section to navigate to that section of the syllabus</i>				
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SECTION 1 – COURSE BIG IDEAS

High-Impact Practice: Immersive Learning Experience

This course is part of an immersive learning experience coordinated with a local elementary school (Burriss Elementary). Ball State defines immersive learning projects as high-impact learning experiences that involve **collaborative student-driven teams**, guided by **faculty mentors** where students **earn credit** for working **with community partners** to **address community challenges** through the **creation of a product** that has a lasting impact.

- *What distinguishes immersive learning from other activities is its **student-driven** emphasis (students direct their learning), **project-oriented outcomes** (it delivers a product at the end of a specified time period), and **collaborative approach** to addressing community challenges.*
 - *Immersive learning projects culminate into a **public demonstration like a showcase or final presentation at the end of the semester**. As a high impact activity, immersive learning projects are relevant, offer students creative opportunities, and accelerate learning. **These experiences enable you to identify and practice workplace skill sets that your future employers need.***
1. *Prerequisite:* MATH 202 with a C- or better grade. Admittance to the teacher preparation program and permission to enroll in designated 300/400-level professional education courses.
 2. *Course Description:* Development of pedagogical-content knowledge through national and state mathematics standards, curricular materials, instructional materials and methods, and assessment related to specific topics in elementary school mathematics. Class ideas applied in teaching situations. May be substituted for MATH 392.
 3. *Course Objectives:* Teacher candidates will —
 - a. Promote equitable and culturally responsive mathematics instruction.
 - b. Plan for and engage in effective mathematics teaching practices:
 - Establish mathematics goals to focus learning.
 - Implement tasks that promote reasoning and problem solving.
 - Use and connect mathematical representations.
 - Facilitate meaningful mathematical discourse.
 - Pose purposeful questions.
 - Build procedural fluency from conceptual understanding.
 - Support productive struggle in learning mathematics.
 - Elicit and use evidence of student thinking.
 - c. Analyze their own and others' teaching practice.
 - d. Anticipate, attend to, and analyze students' thinking about mathematics content.
 - e. Analyze the content of the elementary mathematics curriculum.
 - f. Cultivate their own mathematics teacher identities.
 4. *Course Rationale:* This course is the fourth in a sequence of courses designed for prospective elementary school teachers to develop their *mathematical knowledge for teaching* (Thames & Ball, 2010). The content of these courses is guided by the [*Standards for Preparing Teachers of Mathematics*](#) (Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators, 2017). There are four equally important and interrelated standards and related indicators that describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that well-prepared beginning teachers of mathematics need to acquire. While MATH 100, 201, and 202 address indicators in Standard C.1 in relation to specific mathematical concepts, practices, and curriculum, MATH 391 addresses indicators in Standards C.2 and C.3, and C.4 in the context of working with children.

Course Goals

MATH 391 is a mathematics teaching methods class. Although techniques for teaching specific types of mathematics topics will be discussed, the major focus of the course is (1) *knowing how elementary students think about and learn mathematics* and (2) *designing instruction and classroom environments to help students understand key mathematical ideas of the curriculum*. **Please keep in mind you are beginning teachers; one broad goal of the methods class is to help you become strong beginning teachers. Being a strong beginning teacher means you will understand tools that you can use to help you work on improving your instruction. It does not mean you will have any of these tools perfected. Teaching is too complex to expect to perfect these tools in a short period of time.** With these points in mind, the specific goals of MATH 391 are as follows:

1. MATH 391 students will create a constructive collaborate climate. Among other things, this includes working with mentor teachers and other school personnel to deconstruct complex dynamics of the local school community context as an additional way to cultivate productive mathematics teaching dispositions and equity-oriented classroom spaces. In addition, MATH 391 students will gain an active awareness of the socio-historical context of mathematics education, unpack their own mathematics identities, and begin to cultivate positive mathematics identities among students.
2. MATH 391 students will demonstrate knowledge of elementary grades mathematics content and process standards (Indiana Academic Standards and Common Core), and be aware of current mathematics education recommendations for teaching. This will be constructed through course readings and activities as well as through collaboration with mentor teachers and task-based interactions with elementary grades students.
3. MATH 391 will have a better understanding of how elementary school students learn mathematics by building on individual experience and prior knowledge and through social activity such as reasoning, representing, and modeling. Students who complete MATH 391 will be able to help elementary school students solve problems, apply mathematical thinking to non-routine mathematical questions, and understand why computational techniques work.
4. MATH 391 will have a beginning understanding of how to assess the progress of elementary school students who are learning mathematics and have a beginning understanding of how to adjust instruction to the unique needs of individual students in diverse classrooms.
5. MATH 391 will have a beginning understanding of how to establish equitable classroom environments, and *design* and *implement* elementary mathematics learning progressions consisting of four three-part lessons (Launch-Explore-Summarize). These lessons will foster the development of mathematical thinking of each and every student and have an explicit focus on orchestrating mathematical discussions, as research shows that students learn more when they share and justify their mathematical thinking, ask questions, make conjectures, and take risks. Issues to consider include how to use appropriate tools (including physical manipulatives, drawing & writing tools, calculators); connect with students of diverse races and cultures; tailor instruction to diverse learners; assess the progress of students; use technology creatively and critically; and orchestrate productive discussions with students using the “5 Practices” for productive mathematical discourse. Given the immersive nature of the experience, this also means students will need to apply previous knowledge or skills to demonstrate comprehension and performance in novel situations.

SECTION 2 – ASSESSMENT OF YOUR WORK

How you are evaluated as a practicing teacher often looks very different from how you are evaluated in your course work. While you may be used to experiences where you turn in assignments and receive points, as a teacher you will be evaluated for meeting particular outcomes. These outcomes are related to your ability to plan lessons, teach effectively, and be professional. In this class, we want to give you an opportunity to be assessed more like a practicing teacher and as a way to focus on the skills you need to be a successful classroom teacher. The goal of doing this is to support more self-directed learning and focus on skills related to teaching and improvement instead of specific point totals.

Over the course of the semester, you will work on 12 outcomes across three teaching domains: planning, instruction, and teacher leadership. Different assignments will focus on different outcomes. At the end of the semester, your final assignment will be to reflect on your experience across most outcomes. Below is a brief table of the outcomes and their descriptions:

DOMAIN 1 Purposeful Planning	DOMAIN 2 Effective Instruction	Domain 3 Teacher Leadership
P.1 Create and interpret objective-driven assessments for students	I.1 Make sense of students' mathematical learning from instruction	TL.1 Collaborate with peers
P.2 Establish ambitious mathematical goals that focus student learning	I.2 Use classroom discussion effectively	TL.2 Participate actively in activities
P.3 Anticipate students' mathematical thinking and dispositions as part of planning	I.3 Interpret and adapt instruction	TL.3 Prepare adequately for class and field
P.4 Create instructional plans that support effective instruction	I.4 Identify next steps in teaching	TL.4 Engage Families in Student Learning

How does grading work? Will we still receive grades?

You will still receive a final letter grade (see grade scale below) for the class, and we will have several benchmarks throughout the semester that indicate the trajectory of your grade. However, for the majority of the semester, your effort will be evaluated according to your effectiveness on the 12 outcomes described above. You will find what it means to be “effective” for each of the outcomes attached to every course assignment. For a given outcome you might receive a level of effectiveness of incomplete, improvement necessary, effective, or above and beyond. This class is designed to help you develop into an effective teacher, while helping you see what is possible to continually improve.

Almost all assignments will include feedback for your further reflection and improvement in planning, instruction, and leadership.

Grade Scale:

A	$93 \leq x \leq 100\%$	B–	$80 \leq x < 83\%$	D+	$67 \leq x < 70\%$
A–	$90 \leq x < 93\%$	C+	$77 \leq x < 80\%$	D	$63 \leq x < 67\%$
B+	$87 \leq x < 90\%$	C	$73 \leq x < 77\%$	D–	$60 \leq x < 63\%$
B	$83 \leq x < 87\%$	C–	$70 \leq x < 73\%$	F	$0 \leq x < 60\%$

How does “effective” translate into a grade?

Your final grade in the class will be scored from your levels of effectiveness across the class outcomes. The outcomes from the Planning and Instruction Domains will determine your letter grade and the outcomes from the Teacher Leadership Domain will determine if that letter receives + or – with it.

Using the Planning and Instruction domains, you can earn a(n):

- A if you have 6 outcomes at effective (or above) and no incompletes
- B if you have 4-5 outcomes at effective (or above) and no incompletes
- C if you have at least 3 outcomes at effective (or above) and no more than 1 incomplete
- D if you have less than 3 outcomes at effective (or above) and/or 2-4 incompletes
- F if you have more than 4 incompletes

Within Teacher Leadership, you must have “effective” in all 4 outcomes for a “+”. One or more “incomplete” in any outcome will result in a “-” on your final grade.

You will complete multiple benchmark check-ins throughout the semester to reflect on your effectiveness across the planning and instruction domains. This gives you an opportunity to more concretely see where you are grade-wise and set goals for yourself in the course moving forward.

Course Assignments:

I will try to make the purpose of each assignment clear. If you have questions about the purpose of the assignment or what is expected of you, please ask. I am always happy to discuss specific concerns with you, although that sometimes has to happen outside of class. The requirements for all major assignments will be distributed as needed during the semester. Brief summaries are available in this document. A tentative schedule can be found on Canvas.

Please proofread your work before turning it in to me. If you need support in issues of grammar, punctuation, or spelling, find someone who will proofread your work for you and/or use the capabilities of your word processor or Grammarly. There are also great writing resources available through BSU.

While tentative due dates are provided, the instructor reserves the right to alter the course schedule if deemed necessary to best meet the spirit of the course.

Major Planning Assignments

Assessment Interview - You will plan and implement an assessment interview with an elementary student. The goal of this interview is to get to know the students you will be working with both personally and mathematically. You will develop an assessment interview protocol, administer it with a student in the field, and complete a write-up detailing the students’ understandings of the mathematics.

Number Talks and Lesson Plans - You will complete four lesson plans (two number talks and two whole class lessons) as a part of your larger unit plan you will be teaching at your elementary school field location. Throughout the semester various sections and drafts of your plans will be submitted for feedback.

Unit Plan - You will be a member of a teaching team (2-3 BSU students), and your group will create a four-lesson learning progression plan using the *Illustrative Mathematics* curricular materials (2 lessons) and provided Number Talk resources (2 lessons). You will submit parts of this unit plan throughout this

semester for feedback. This is your opportunity to revise your lessons/learning progression plan based on feedback (and your experiences in the field) and submit a final product.

Major Instruction Assignments

Field Reflections - You will go to your elementary field placement 9 times this semester (1 orientation day, 7 field experience days, and 1 after school field experience). After each field day, you will be asked to complete field reflections on your experiences. Additionally, you will complete a cumulative reflection at the end of your field experience. It is important that you attend all field days, as you will be unable to “make up” your field experiences. In extenuating circumstances (such as a documented medical issue), your instructor will work with you to determine an alternate assignment to replace your missing field reflection.

Major Teacher Leadership Assignments

Benchmark Reflection Goal Setting – You will do multiple benchmark reflections throughout the semester, beginning with setting particular goals in each of the 3 domains (planning, instruction, and teacher leadership). This will be an opportunity to self-evaluate your efforts, make a plan for improvement, and adjust your goals as needed. I will read your benchmark check-in, give you feedback on it, and use this space to let you know your anticipated grade trajectory for the class.

Final Assessment – You will have the opportunity to reflect on your growth in the 8 outcomes from Planning and Instruction and, using evidence from class and field, make a case for adjustments to your final grade. The format of this assignment is up to you, but you must describe your experiences in each of the 8 outcomes, your level of effectiveness, and provide evidence to support your descriptions.

SECTION 3 – COURSE SCHEDULE

Below you will find a tentative course calendar for the semester. A more detailed and regularly updated calendar can be found on the home page of our Canvas Course.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Course pacing and assignment due dates are subject to change; however, any changes will be communicated to you both in class and through Canvas.

MATH 391: Tentative Course Calendar (Burriss)

Week	Topics
Week 1 (Jan 6-10)	Mathematics identities; How students learn math
Week 2	Ambitious and equitable math teaching; Standards and curriculum
Week 3	Practice 0: Setting Goals; Practice 1: Anticipating; FIELD #0
Week 4	Practice 2: Monitoring
Week 5	Assessment Interviews; Practices 3-4: Selecting and Sequencing; FIELD #1
Week 6	Practice 5: Connecting; Class discussions
Week 7	Number Talks; FIELD #2
Week 8	Family Engagement; FIELD #3
Week 9	SPRING BREAK
Week 10	Number Talk Workshops; Introduction to Lesson Plans; FIELD #4
Week 11	Lesson Launch Workshop; Lesson Explore Workshop; FIELD #5
Week 12	Lesson Summarize Workshop
Week 13	Lesson Plan Rehearsals; Differentiation; FIELD #6/7
Week 14	Student participation; Fact fluency; FIELD #6/7
Week 15	Unit Plan Workshop; Vertical alignment
Week 16	Adapting Tasks; Planning for future learning
Finals Week	Final Assessment
*This list is not exhaustive. Consult the Canvas course schedule for the most up-to-date schedule.	
Family Math Night Field Experience time is TBA	

Technology Help

As a student in this course, you will use technology regularly to access materials, complete assessments, engage with your instructor and peers, etc. Along the way, you may run into technical issues, and we want to address those concerns as quickly as possible. Here are some helpful resources:

- For Canvas related issues, click the Help icon in the lower left corner of your Canvas screen. It looks like a question mark. In the populated list, you will see links for contacting Canvas 24/7 via chat or phone, as well as a quick orientation on how to use Canvas for discussion boards, quizzes, and assignments in your classes.
- You will also see a link to Ball State's Technology HelpDesk. You can search the Knowledge Base for guides, and you can also speak to someone by phone, chat, or drop in if you are on campus. The Technology HelpDesk is located on the Southwest corner of the first floor of Bracken Library. The HelpDesk can help with things like passwords, software needs, problems with watching class videos, computer problems and more.

SECTION 4 – POLICIES

Course Policies:

Professionalism

You are expected to actively participate and exhibit a professional attitude/demeanor in class, in the field, and when completing assignments in Canvas. Professionalism in class looks like paying attention, actively engaging in class activities, contributing to (speaking and listening) but not dominating discussions, coming prepared (read the readings), putting your phone and headphones away, and being on time. Professionalism in the field looks like dressing as a teacher professional (think something you would wear to a teaching interview), knowing and respecting elementary placement school expectations, timely and consistent communication with your mentor teacher, and being on time and prepared for all field experiences (elementary teachers and students are counting on you). With respect to assignments, professionalism looks like turning assignments in on time and reading and attending to any feedback given. Professionalism also includes collaboration and communication with your peers.

You should be in contact with your peers as needed to plan all group assignments and every member should contribute substantially to the group efforts. Timely communication with the instructor throughout the course is also an important component of your professionalism.

Attendance Policy—Class: As a future educator, attendance is important. Because this class includes whole-class and small-group discussions based on readings and videos as well as hands-on activities and field experiences, the missed class experience cannot be duplicated through getting someone else’s notes. Similarly, in your future classroom, you will not be able to skip work and leave a classroom of students alone. Therefore, if you are going to miss class, you are expected to contact the instructor before class. Good communication is an essential professional skill that is required both in this course and your future teaching career. **There is a limit of 2 absences.** After the second absence, students must schedule a meeting with the course instructor to discuss a plan, which may include dropping the course. **Each absence beyond the second will result in a half letter grade deduction for the FINAL COURSE GRADE.** For example, if you finished the class with a B+ but had a 3rd unexcused absence, your grade would be lowered to a B. Attendance is essential for your own learning and professional training, but also essential for your peers.

Failure to communicate with the instructor when absent will result in an “incomplete” for outcome TL.3 “Prepare adequately for class and field.”

The only exception to the above are serious extenuating circumstances, such as an unexpected surgery or major illness, or legal or religious obligations as outlined by university policy. In all cases, you should let your instructor know about the extenuating circumstances immediately. The instructor will then work with you to make a plan about what to do, which may include a range of options. *Students should assume all due dates and course requirements still apply if absent.*

Attendance Policy—Field Experience: As a methods course focused on the practice of teaching mathematics in elementary grades, this course incorporates several field experience sessions at a local elementary school. Course assignments are coordinated with these field sessions, and mentor teachers and elementary students are counting on you to be present AND prepared for these sessions. **Each field session absence will result in a full letter grade deduction (e.g., A to B, B to C, etc.) for the final course grade, and may result in failure of the course.**

The only exception to the above are serious extenuating circumstances, such as an unexpected surgery or major illness, or legal or religious obligations as outlined by university policy. In all cases, you should let your instructor know about the extenuating circumstances immediately. You should also communicate with your mentor teacher. The instructor will then work with you to make a plan about what to do, which may include a range of options. *Students should assume all due dates and course requirements still apply if absent.*

Late Work: All course assignments will have designated due dates. These due dates are not assigned haphazardly. They are assigned so that the work you are doing outside of class aligns with the work we are doing in class and so that the instructor is able to give you meaningful feedback that will help as you progress in the course. Therefore, as a general rule, late work will only be accepted (at instructor’s discretion) when students *make prior arrangements* with the course instructor. If accepted, late work may be penalized up to a full letter grade for each day it is late. It will be graded, but it may not receive as in-depth of feedback as work turned in by the due date.

Professional Conduct: Please turn off or silence cell phones during class. You are welcome to take notes electronically, but do not surf the web, email, text, etc. (i.e., be present physically and mentally in class). It is expected that all students in MATH 391 adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct whether in the field (including dressing professionally) or in class – failure to do so may adversely affect final grade.

Background Checks: Please make sure your Castlebranch Background Check and EduRisk Training are current. Castlebranch background checks are valid from Fall Semester – Summer II each school year. You will be unable to participate in field experience without these documents on file with the OTES office.

University Policies:

University Statement: We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

Disability Statement: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Withdrawal Period: The course withdrawal period ends **March 19, 2026**. Before this date, students can elect to receive a “W” for the course by completing and submitting the proper form. The instructor’s permission is not required. For details, see <https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/registrar/registration-activities/withdraw-from-classes> as well as Degree Requirements and Time Limits in the current Undergraduate Catalog OR Withdrawal Procedures in the current graduate catalog.

Academic Integrity: Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA’s [academic integrity website](#) (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU’s academic integrity expectations and students’ rights, please read the University [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#).

Student Rights and Responsibilities: Students are expected to read, understand, and adhere to the community standards found at <https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/student-conduct/policiesandprocedures/studentcode>.

AI and CHATGPT Statement: As you work on and submit assignments this semester, know that using generative AI tools to complete your assignments is a violation of Ball State’s [Academic Ethics Policy](#) *unless* the AI use is explicitly approved by the faculty member. Students may not submit any work generated by an AI program as their own. Doing so is plagiarism. **If submitted work is shown to be created with generative AI and in a non-permissible way, it may result in a grade of 0 for that assignment.** Work created outside of those guidelines will be considered an Academic Ethics Policy violation. If a student’s grade is affected by an academic ethics violation, faculty are required to report the violation to the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs who oversees the Student Academic Ethics policy and maintains records of its violations.

Teachers College Disposition Information:

Becoming an effective teacher includes demonstrating professional dispositions, which include attitudes, habits of action, and commitments that foster student learning and assist in elevating the education profession, as well as in interacting with families, community members, and colleagues. The Ball State Disposition Assessment System is a systematic, consistent approach to assessing and supporting teacher candidates’ disposition growth throughout their preparation. This system has two components: (1) a disposition rubric system, and (2) a disposition alert system, which provide opportunities for deliberate feedback and guidance regarding teacher candidates’ disposition development. Information about the rubric, procedures, and alert policy are available on the [OTES webpage](#).

Teachers College Standards and Guidelines for Activities Involving Minors: In addition to other requirements outlined above, prospective teachers must read and sign the Teachers College Standards and Guidelines for Activities Involving Minors. This will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas.

SECTION 5 – RESOURCES

Funding Available for Course Support:

As an immersive learning course MATH 391 students are eligible to apply for a CHIRP scholarship. You can apply for funds (up to \$500) to support the costs of traveling to the field site, professional attire, etc. **The deadline to apply for this scholarship is January 23, 2026.** You can learn more and apply at:

<https://ballstate.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1996556>

Mental Health Concerns: If you are experiencing mental health concerns, telehealth services are available – here is a link to the [Counseling Center website](#). The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State now also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.

Freedom of Expression: In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University’s Statement on Freedom of Expression, the resources on Ball State’s Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State’s Beneficence Pledge.

The Basic Needs Hub: If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the [Basic Needs Hub](#). The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a [Basic Needs Assistance Form](#).

Instructor Note: Although syllabus information is as accurate as possible, changes may be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances, including changes in field. Any changes (e.g., course requirements, deadlines, grading percentages, semester calendar, field experience) will be clearly communicated to you.

Last updated on 1/2/2026 by CA.