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MCC alumna Stephanie Hiltz helps Brantley Greenhoe with his reading in her first-grade classroom at Central Montcalm Elementary School in Sheridan.



# Stephanie HILTZ

## MCC alumna is living her dream as an elementary school teacher

**S**tephanie Hiltz always wanted to be a teacher and is now living her dream.

Hiltz is a first-grade teacher at Central Montcalm Elementary School in Sheridan.

“I have been very persistent in following my heart,” the 23-year-old said. “I always knew what I wanted to do, and I did what needed to be done to make that happen. I have always been very focused on the future and I tried to make choices that would be best for that future.

“For that reason, I chose Montcalm Community College,” she added. “With the money I saved at MCC, I was able to put it toward my tuition at Grand Valley State University (GVSU). At GVSU, I continued to work through school so that I would be able to buy my house with my fiancé and move forward with our lives once I graduated.”

Hiltz began pursuing her dream in high school.

“During my senior year of high school, I dual enrolled at MCC,” she said. “I took Introduction to Education, which allowed me to leave school an hour early every day. With my time off from high school, I volunteered at Cedar Crest Elementary a few days a week.”

Hiltz graduated from Greenville High School in 2012 and continued her education at MCC.

“I chose MCC mainly because my family is very important to me,” she said. “I wanted to stay at home, work through school and attend a school that was affordable.”

Hiltz graduated from MCC in May 2014 with an Associate of Liberal Studies with high honors, a Liberal Studies Certificate and she completed all of her general educational requirements under the Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars & Admissions Officers (MACRAO) transfer agreement, now the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA).

“I began classes at GVSU that fall,” she said. “The education program at GVSU takes five years and I had two of them completed at MCC. I was able to transfer right in and begin working on my education major.

“I commuted all three years because being with family was important to me,” she added. “I made my class schedule work for me so I could do that.”

Hiltz began her teaching career in college during an internship at United World College (UWC) in Maastricht, Netherlands.

“I went on a four-week study abroad trip with 15 other English education majors,” she said. “I was like a student assistant in a first-grade classroom.

“Students from all over the world study at UWC,” she added. “They speak English, but very few of the students have English as their first language. It was amazing to see so many kids from so many different cultures coming together to learn. It was incredible to watch teachers interacting with students who did not even speak the same language as them.”

Hiltz graduated from GVSU with a double major in English and education in May 2017.

Throughout her college career, Hiltz worked to pay for her education.

“During most of my time at MCC, I was serving at Big Boy in Greenville,” she said. “During my transition between MCC and GVSU, I began working at a day care, where I worked for two years. After that, I was a nanny for a family in Cedar Springs during the days I was not at GVSU and I worked at JCPenney in Greenville on the weekends.”

Now Hiltz spends her time in the classroom. She began teaching at Central Montcalm Elementary School last fall.

“I am still in my first year of teaching and it has been a whirlwind,” she said. “There are many challenges that I wasn’t totally prepared for, but I am doing the best that I can, and trying to learn and grow as much as I can as I go.

“Teaching has proved to be rewarding at times, and I am very thankful for the opportunity to try to make a difference in students’ lives and their futures,” she added.

Hiltz resides in Greenville. She and her fiancé, Colton Boehm, plan to be married in June.