This semester, Holyoke Elementary School has welcomed

student teacher Nicole Churchwell into Lynn Schneider's third grade classroom.

Churchwell is an elementary education major at Colorado Christian University, and plans to graduate with her teaching degree in May.

"I love it," she said about student teaching. "The students are wonderful. Although, I've been amazed at all the work and the hours that go into teaching."

Churchwell has lived in Holyoke for nine years and was a cosmetologist until her oldest son was born. She and her husband David, who works at Highline Electric, have two children in elementary, Zachary who's in fourth grade and Ashlyn in second, and a third, Braxten, who is 2.

After she started having children, Churchwell continued to do some freelance cosmetology from home. She also started volunteering at HES, which is how she became interested in teaching.

"I saw students who were struggling and I wanted to do something to help them," she said.

To get her degree, she began taking online classes at Northeastern Junior College in Sterling. She then took all her core education classes on campus at Colorado Christian.

Churchwell admitted juggling school and a family isn't easy. "It was stressful and very busy," she said. "I would recommend to others that they go to school before having a family."

After only four years in school, however, her hard work is about to pay off. Then she hopes to have more time to chase after her family through all their extracurricular activities.

As for other future plans, Churchwell said she wants to pursue her teaching career in Holyoke.

“I really like it here,” she said. “I think Holyoke has a great school and staff.”