

When I was interviewed to be apart of the ELITE Leadership Academy, I was so excited and ready to start something new. In my interview, I remember reciting the acronym for ELITE and defined what each letter/word meant. Although I recited it, I didn't realize how much those words and this program as a whole would mean to me later on. In 2018 when I became a member of this program, I was very shy and didn't open up as easily to people. Whenever it was my turn to speak in the meetings, I was nervous. Now, it is the year of 2020, I have been in ELITE for 3 years. Over the course of these 3 years, I have gained confidence in myself that I never knew I had. In leadership training, Mrs. Ruby taught me that there is so the world offers, there are many great opportunities to help make people succeed, but it's all up to me to branch out and take advantage of opportunities and to never be afraid to take risks and achieve greatest. Mr. Harvey taught me in abstinence training to always value myself, stick to my morals and always do what is best for me and my health. Mrs. Jackson has provided me with all the tools and resources needed to be successful in high school, college, and beyond. Mrs. Eileen and Mrs. Kesia are the foundation of this program and made this program possible with the goals of students achieving their dreams while learning and developing into leaders of their community and within their schools. I thank each and every one on you for bringing the meaning of E.L.I.T.E. to life.

Although Camp Zion 2020 wasn't what we imagined or thought it would be, it was an awesome experience. Camp Zion 2020 will go down in the history books for a summer of firsts and is filled with many memories. For the first time ever, we experienced virtual camp, virtual college tours, with limited in-person activities. To top it off, this summer marked the 20th anniversary of Camp Zion. I am grateful and humbled to be a part of the Next Level experience. As a member of the ELITE leadership program, I had the amazing opportunity and privilege to work with Dr. Melvin Fussell's Urological Health Center as my internship for the summer. This experience has been second to none. I was able to participate in numerous hands-on activities while shadowing him and his staff. Anything that I could legally do, he allowed me to do. I had first hand interaction with patients, doctors, and nurses. I was able to observe 5 surgical procedures that took place at the Surgery Center of his practice. This internship has been most valuable because I've been exposed to the various aspects of working in the medical field and it has given me a realistic view of my career aspirations to be a nurse practitioner.

Through ELITE I have developed into an empowered leader, inspired to positively impact the community. I have transformed from a shy, insecure teenager to a confident outgoing young lady unafraid to go for my goals who won't stop until I reach above and beyond my goals. E.L.I.T.E has opened so many doors of opportunity for me and has taught me that no matter how hard things get, no matter what challenges I face, ALWAYS stay determined and focused on my goals and the road to success. I hope that ELITE and the Next Level Community Development Center continues to impact other students' lives just as it has done for me and that each and every student leaves out of this program as young leaders ready to take on the world and inspire others. Thank You Next Level for all that you have done for me and all that you continue to do for all students!