

# It's All About Smiles

The dental careers class Amber Weems took as a senior at West Potomac Academy equipped her with a great deal of firsthand knowledge of dental practices—along with a state dental radiograph certification.

Soon after, Amber was able to put that knowledge to work as a dental assistant. “After my course, I felt very comfortable working in a dental office. I found that I was already knowledgeable about many of the tasks; I understood WHY we did things, so I wasn’t just following a procedure.”

Amber is now about to begin studies to become a dentist. “I feel I have an advantage, because I’ve had hands-on experience [in dentistry], so I know what I’m in for.”

## **AMBER WEEMS** Student/Substitute Teacher

**High School:** West Potomac Academy/Mt. Vernon High School

**CTE Program Studied:** Dental Careers

**Additional Studies/Training:** West Potomac Academy (Dental Radiology Safety Certification), Longwood University (Biology)

## Dental Assistant

Dental assistants may perform tasks at a dentist’s office ranging from cleaning instruments to taking X-rays. With the right background, a high school graduate can go directly to work as a dental assistant, and can take an exam to become a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA). Once in the field, a person can continue studying to become a dental hygienist—or even a dentist.

## Electives to take in high school

- Medical Health Technologies I & II
- Dental Careers I & II
- Biology
- Chemistry

## What to study after high school

Students can earn a dental radiograph certification in the dental careers II course. Community colleges offer two-year dental hygienist programs, and students can also enter careers through four-year degree programs at state and private colleges. Persons working as dental assistants may elect to take a national exam to become Certified Dental Assistants.