

Finisher's Think Tank



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Back to School— Great Benefits for Finishers

It's that time of year when students, in unison, from primary grades right up to college go back to school. Another year of feeding the mind awaits those ready to accept it. A continuous flow of young people master specific disciplines that will help place them in positions such as culture, technology, innovation, and healing. Society and our global enterprises depend heavily on the fresh talents and work ethic of each generation, to keep the system running and progressing.

Does this new season of education include us, the formally schooled and graduated metal finishers of years recent and years long ago? Without a doubt, yes indeed. I venture that many among us learn something new each day. If we really didn't, plating and surface finishing would be dull and boring. Happily, most of the people I have worked with, really like this industry and strive to keep quality high and improve specific aspects of their work. We have a lot going for us, representing at least five percent of our country's annual gross national product (GNP).

Aerospace, transportation, medical, engineering, and consumers, are some of the critical users of parts that we condition and finish. Specifications, tolerances, and service life are some of our major concerns when processing parts. We are keen and adept at learning on the job. Every person involved in the handling and finishing of parts readily contributes something important to the cycle. This can be in the form of experience, practical application, handling, or control. In general, the more we are exposed to processes and intermediate steps, the better we can modify and improve them. The mark of success serves to spark new ideas and developments.

You're Never Too Old

Considering all the benefits of diligent and thoughtful work, we should acknowledge the potential of back to school. One is

never too old to learn. For us, as experienced metal finishers, school takes on several forms, all in practical presentations, designed to enhance our knowledge as we continue working. Finishers, suppliers, and even immediate customers of finished goods, are conditioned to invest quality time, keeping them sharp and in the know.

The Institution Varies, The Focus is the Same

Let us consider some examples of schools that are always in session.

- **AESF.** This is your organization, an educational society, dedicated to advancing the knowledge and experience of plating and surface finishing. Surface preparation, plating, electroless deposition, chromating, phosphating, and other surface treatments, along with waste treatment and conservation, are covered in sufficient detail to meet individual needs. Essentials such as plater's math, Faraday's Law, and conversion factors are incorporated into most programs. Home study courses are offered. Regional class sessions from 1–5 days are proctored by acknowledged industry experts. Special course seminars coincide with major AESF events (SUR/FIN®, AESF WEEK, etc.). Accreditation, such as the CEF designations and certifications, measure progress and achievements. Supplemental and support material, readily available at the AESF bookstore, offers comprehensive treatments of all metal finishing subjects. The Lecture Series and courses on CD rom bring the shop atmosphere to life while you learn and sharpen skills. Seminars and special meetings occur regionally, addressing specific subjects of current interest. Monthly branch meetings usually feature guest speakers discussing some facet or link to our industrial experience. Some AESF branches offer

annual plating schools, for the benefit of local members and sponsoring companies. Announcements for any of the described learning experiences are conveyed to the membership by mass mailings, internet announcements, branch newsletters, and in *Plating & Surface Finishing* magazine (the last page never fails to inform). Be sure not to miss any education opportunities, by regularly visiting aesf.org. While you are there, don't forget to check informative links such as the bookstore and scheduled events.

- **Other Professional Organizations.** NAMF, MAMF, and several process specific organizations also offer excellent educational opportunities. Check for their announcements in *Plating & Surface Finishing*, other periodicals, and by regularly visiting the particular organization's web site.
- **Supplier/Vendor Services.** Suppliers and vendors (S&Vs) of chemicals, specialties, and equipment invest quality time developing specific processes and performance equipment. They know by experience, thorough evaluation, and field development, just what it takes to make systems work right and optimally. Many S&Vs provide seminars focusing on subjects, processes, procedures, and troubleshooting. These informative "skull sessions" may last from 1–3 days.
- **In-House Sessions.** These are usually practical, informative meetings that suppliers and finishers conduct in their plants. Process cycles, problems, corrective measures, planning, are some of the items discussed. A good deal of "cross pollination" occurs during these meetings, benefiting the individuals and company.
- **Procedure Specific.** This could be interpreted as "do as you say." The reference is to investment in on-going education and training. ISO, NACD, and other corporate structured programs may include

continued education and sharpening of work skills. These are mandatory sessions in the form of workshops, seminars, and other such organized classes.

- **Adult Classes.** Certified institutions, such as community colleges (2 year) and state colleges (4 year), offer more in depth coverage. Subjects may include chemistry, physics, and advanced math. Courses are offered in the evenings, accommodating the schedules of those holding full time jobs. Subject material usually focuses on the needs of adult professionals. Some courses offer regional or state certified programs, such as wastewater operations or boiler operating license.
- **Specialty Seminars.** These are typically one day programs. Subjects include: writing, grammar, organization, prioritizing, using the computer & related programs, and accounting principles.

The metal finishing industry offers many challenges. North America employs approximately 100,000 of us in this field, as finishers, suppliers, and engineers. Each of us faces daily opportunities to learn, teach, and progress. Sometimes a good fit or supporting background includes school, in any of the available forms outlined previously. Employers covet personnel who desire more information to improve their particular skills. Many companies sponsor additional schooling. Investing in your future may include appropriate classes or seminars. Think about it. The opportunities and benefits are almost limitless. *P&SF*

Editor's note: For information on AESF Fall Courses, see page 44, or go to www.aesf.org.