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The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) issued a Federal Register notice (Vol. 73, No. 223) on November 18, 2008, requesting comments on a proposal to revise the existing system for classifying occupations into education or training categories. The purpose of this note is to summarize the feedback received from the Federal Register notice and to update users on the status of our new education and training system.

BLS received much feedback on the proposed new education and training system through the end of the comment period, which ended on December 18, 2008. Most comments were supportive of the proposed changes and acknowledged that the new system was an improvement over our existing one. We also received suggestions for additional modifications and other improvements to the proposed system. Staff in the Employment Projections (EP) program reviewed all of the comments and recommended additional changes to the new system based on all of the feedback we received. After making these adjustments, we trained EP analysts in how to apply the new system to their assigned occupations. We then conducted a test using a subset of occupational data to determine if the rules and guidelines for putting the system into operation were clear enough to allow our analysts to apply them consistently.

Our testing yielded mixed results, and has led us to decide to continue to refine the new system and procedures and further develop staff training, rather than implement it for the 2008-18 projections. In particular, we will reconsider our decisions to: 1) assign "lowest level" education categories rather than the "typical" or "most significant," 2) eliminate a work experience rating, and 3) move from using three on-the-job training categories to two.

For the 2008-18 projections, scheduled for release in December 2009, we will use our original 11-category education or training system. In the meantime, we will continue to refine the new system and apply it in 2010, developing an experimental data set that will be made available to the public on our web site (www.bls.gov/emp). Obtaining additional feedback from users will allow us to better understand how the new system works in practice before we replace the widely-used old system entirely.

Our ultimate goal is to produce an education and training classification system that is logical and useful to our customers, and that provides a consistent method for observing trends in the education and training requirements for occupations.

If you have any questions about the process and our future plans for modifying our education and training system, feel free to contact either Kristina Bartsch or Roger Moncarz.

Sincerely,

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