

Personalised Learning and Support Signposting Tool (PLASST) 2013 Trial

The PLASST is a tool that the Department of Education and Communities is developing to assist teachers and learning and support teams in profiling the educational needs of students who may need personalised learning and support associated with disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and Disability Standards for Education 2005.

The PLASST trial is building on previous work by the Department to further identify, understand and profile differences in learning needs of students across NSW schools. The trial will lead to the development of a web based tool for use by teachers and school teams. When complete, the tool will be used in consultation with parents and carers to 'signpost' the relative strengths and educational needs of individual students. This information will inform teachers and school teams in personalising learning and support for students.

What is the PLASST?

PLASST stands for Personalised Learning And Support Signposting Tool. This tool comprises 3 major elements:

1. A set of questions developed by the Department and education experts to capture student educational needs.
2. A statistical model which provides a scientific basis for valid and reliable reporting.
3. A website which collects question responses and reports back to teachers to inform their professional practice in personalising learning and support for the student where needed.

Why is the Trial important?

Earlier versions of the tool have already been tested on a sample of students with confirmed disability. Following analysis of the earlier results, the questions have been revised to more effectively profile a broader group of students with additional learning and support needs including those without confirmed disability. This redesign requires new data to validate the underlying statistical model and confirm the effectiveness of the questions.

The trial of the PLASST will collect the data that will enable this work to be completed. In addition to these statistical needs, the trial will validate the usability of the website.

The purpose of the tool is to provide an intuitive and simple process to guide teachers as they identify individual student's educational needs and implement personalised learning and support for their students. This trial is an important step in ensuring that we get it right from the start.

Which schools will participate in the trial?

More than 550 schools across Illawarra and South East, New England and South Western Sydney have been asked to participate in the trial.

Teachers are being asked to profile selected students in order to generate the data needed to further develop the tool. Decisions about which school staff will be involved in the trial will be made locally in the school.

High levels of participation in the trial will contribute necessary data and feedback to test and further develop the tool.

Which students are in the trial target group?

In order to further develop the tool, a wide range of students with additional learning and support needs associated with disability are included in the target group for the trial.

Students whom teachers believe have additional learning and support needs should be included in the trial. This includes students with intellectual, physical, sensory or social/emotional disabilities and students with difficulties in learning or behaviour. It includes students without a disability confirmation, and students in mainstream or regular classes, as well as students in special schools and support classes.

Parents and carers will be informed about the trial and provided with an opportunity to discuss their child's possible involvement in or exclusion from the trial.

Who completes the tool? How is the data collected? How is the data analysed and reported?

Teachers complete an online question set for each selected student. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has designed a secure web database specifically for the trial data. All users will have a unique login and password and schools will only be able to see the data related to their own school.

Data will be analysed by experts in education research and statistical analysis, co-ordinated by PwC.

At no time during the trial will students be required to complete additional work, be formally assessed in any way or meet with PwC or any trial personnel.

PLASST 2013 Trial

What data will be collected? How will this be secured?

As part of the trial, the following student information will be collected:

- The Department of Education and Communities student registration number (SRN)
- Demographic information including student age, gender and school year group
- Responses to the tool's question set relating to the individual student's strengths, abilities and educational needs.

Data security and protection is a priority. Student data is submitted through the secure web database specifically designed by PwC for this trial. The student's name is not identified. PwC staff do not have access to any other student information. This data will not be used for any purpose other than the trial.

How long will it take to complete the tool?

Initial testers have reported that completion of the PLASST should take up to 20 minutes per student once teachers are familiar with the tool and its questions.

The design of the web-based tool provides flexibility for teachers to complete one or multiple students concurrently and at a time suitable to the teacher.

How will principals, teachers and other school staff be supported during the trial?

School personnel will be provided with an information package which includes:

- This fact sheet about the PLASST trial
- A PowerPoint about the PLASST trial for principals to use with staff to assist in preparing for the trial
- Information about the PLASST trial that can be tailored for inclusion in the school newsletter
- A letter about the PLASST trial for parents and carers that can be tailored by the school.

To support the trial schools will also be provided with:

- Access to professional learning on the *DDA and Disability Standards for Education 2005*
- A detailed user guide and integrated online assistance for the PLASST
- On-line and telephone support provided by PWC throughout the trial.
- An allocation of funding to support the participation of teachers in the trial.

What will participation in the trial provide?

The 2013 trial will provide:

- An opportunity for principals, teachers and other staff in trial schools to participate in professional learning to increase understanding of the *DDA and Disability Standards for Education 2005*

- Testing and assuring of the robustness of the web-based tool profiling students' needs ahead of full implementation
- Opportunity to begin preparations for the new nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability that will be progressively phased in across all Australian schools during 2013-2015.

What reporting will be provided back to the school from the trial?

For the purposes of the trial, reports will be produced for all students at the end of the trial, after the collection and analysis of the trial data has been completed.

An example of the information that the report is intended to provide is included in the communication PowerPoint. If unexpected insights arise from the trial data, the format of the report may be altered.

Will the trial affect existing processes used to identify, assess and determine assistance for students with disability?

The purpose of the trial is to develop a new tool to assist teachers in profiling the needs of students who may need reasonable adjustments. During the trial, some students may be identified as having additional learning and support needs beyond those previously identified.

The trial will not affect existing assessments for students with disability, or existing processes for determining assistance for those students.

Timeline for PLASST trial

The table below identifies the key activities for the trial that will take place in Term 3, 2013. Principals will receive an email in early Term 3 with access details for the PLASST trial website and user guide for the tool.

Weeks 1-2	Schools inform parents about the trial
Weeks 2-5	School staff complete professional learning and complete the data collection online
Weeks 8-9	Focus group feedback
Weeks 5-10	PwC analysis, evaluation and reporting.

In Term 4, 2013 the tool will be finalised with a target of full implementation in 2014.

Further information

For further information about the trial, please contact the PLASST support team:

- Phone our support line on **1800 792 492**
- Email us at PLASST.trial@au.pwc.com