

# Resource Teachers Literacy Professional Practice Manual

2012

To be reviewed September 2012

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### RESOURCE TEACHERS OF LITERACY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Resource Teachers of Literacy (RTLit) are specialist teachers who support and assist staff in schools to meet the needs of year one to eight students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.

The RTLit service provides short, intensive support to students with high literacy needs. The goal is that students' make accelerated learning progress and are able to work at or near the appropriate New Zealand Reading and/or Writing Standard and benefit from effective classroom teaching such that they maintain expected progress and close the gap with their cohort.

The RTLit service will also identify those students with persistent learning needs who will require ongoing specialist support.

RTLit support may focus on reading and/or writing and/or oral language development. RTLit provide advice, modelling and guidance for classroom teachers who work with students on the RTLit roll. The RTLit may also provide direct instruction to individuals or small-groups of students who require intensive instruction.

RTLit are employed by a host school and work across a number of schools within a cluster. RTLit management and governance are the responsibility of a management committee, which consists of representatives of principals in the cluster of schools they work with. Guidance for these operational matters is contained in an Operations Manual.

Professional practice for RTLit has built on past experiences of the now disestablished Resource Teachers of Reading, as well as the experiences of individual RTLit and RTLit clusters around the country. This has led to the development of RTLit practice that is diverse and nationally inconsistent.

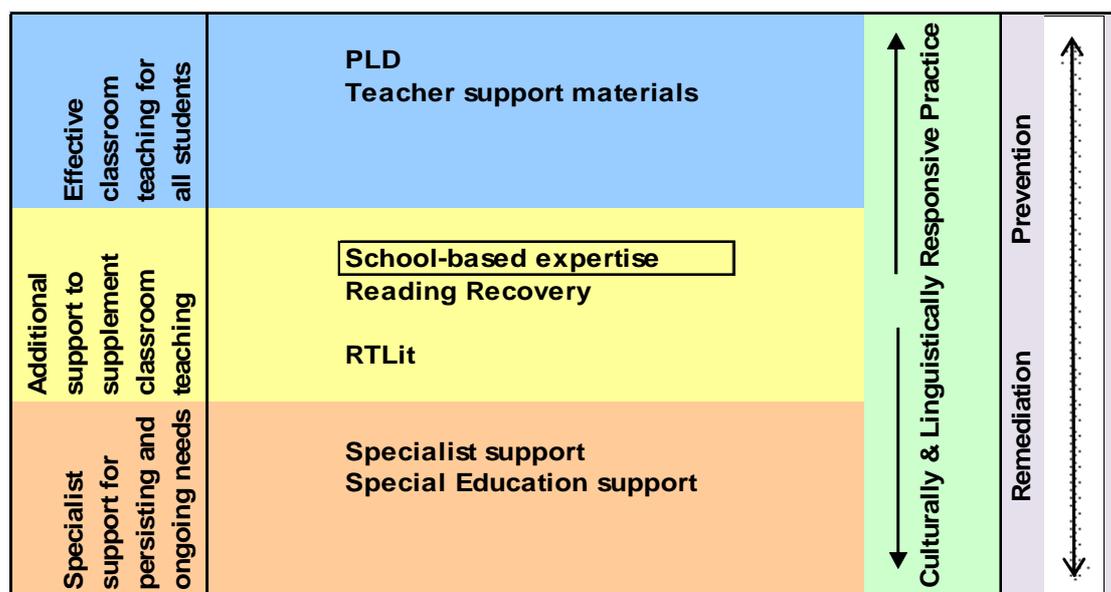
For example, data collected by the Ministry of Education as part of its annual monitoring of RTLit performance and effectiveness show that RTLit use different referral, assessment, selection and discharge processes. In addition, the data show that students in some RTLit clusters receive much longer periods of support than in others and processes for ongoing support vary from cluster to cluster.

The *Resource Teachers Literacy Professional Practice Manual* is intended to provide schools, management committees, host principals and RTLit with some clear guidelines of good practice to increase effectiveness and access, and to ensure common understandings of key terminology / definitions. It describes parameters for RTLit work and provides clarity as they make professional and deliberate decisions about how they support primary age students with the highest literacy needs - and the schools of these students.

## RTLIT AS PART OF SYSTEM LITERACY INTERVENTION

It can become evident at any stage of a student’s schooling that there is a need for the provision of additional responsive, intensive teaching to accelerate learning. The need for a student’s teaching team to be augmented may emerge as students acquire literacy in the early years or later as the complexity of curriculum texts and tasks increases contributing to a slowing of progress. The Ministry of Education response to the differing strengths and needs of students is to view literacy learning in New Zealand schools in terms of three tiers.

- Tier 1: Effective classroom teaching
- Tier 2: Intensive support that supplements effective classroom teaching
- Tier 3: Specialist support for ongoing and persistent needs



For those students who require intensive support to supplement their effective classroom programme (Tier 2 support) the Ministry of Education has established the RTLit, who have specific literacy knowledge and experience and can provide specialist support for a student’s teaching team.

RTLit are agents of change, leading an intervention and influencing school leaders and teachers to make effective decisions for students not making expected literacy progress. They are integral to a system literacy intervention for students who are not meeting curriculum expectations - their professional practice should be seen within this context. The principle for RTLit intervening is the provision of early, timely and

appropriate support for teachers and students that promotes early intervention for literacy difficulties that reduces the demand for later (remedial) instruction.

As well as their direct impact on student achievement, RTLit have a role to play in ensuring that the whole system is well placed to respond to literacy learning demands in a cohesive and consistent manner. RTLit will fulfill this role through their ability to work with and guide school leadership and teachers of the students on the RTLit roll.

The RTLit provide student achievement data and other relevant information to the Ministry of Education Research Division annually. This monitoring information is critical in allowing the Ministry to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the service and identify areas for system improvement.

## CORE WORK OF THE RTLIT SERVICE

The RTLit service is a finite resource with 109 RTLit positions throughout the country. The RTLit service is intended to focus on those students with the highest literacy needs within a school or cluster of schools. In order for these students to get the best service possible, it is paramount that RTLit focus on their core function which is working with students who have been enrolled for RTLit instruction. As outlined later in the manual, this instruction can be direct or indirect; however, it should always be specifically related to students on the RTLit roll. All actions taken by RTLit should have the intention of resulting in direct literacy learning benefits for these students.

Where an RTLit is considering undertaking actions which may see them working at a distance from students on the RTLit roll, the decision to do so should be carefully considered.

## PRACTICE GUIDELINES

### ACCESS

Which students are able to get intensive support, how those students are identified, and whether their access to the intervention is timely and appropriate are important questions for the RTLit service.

RTLits must take agency in ensuring equitable decisions are made for students in accessing RTLit service and that student progress and achievement continues to be monitored within and beyond the service.

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### REFERRALS TO RTLIT SERVICE

RTLit should exert their agency in guiding and influencing good referral practices to ensure that every student with the highest literacy learning needs is referred. This may include working with the management committees to influence referrals, working directly with school leaders to review their referral practices, and assisting teachers with their assessment and reporting processes for students with identified literacy learning needs.

As noted earlier in the manual, RTLit resource is finite so it is crucial that management committee leadership manages and monitors rolls and waiting lists.

To ensure equity of access across all schools careful judgment should be made when referring students to be on the RTLit roll. RTLit and management committees should take note of the following priorities for RTLit instruction:

- students well below National Reading & Writing Standards
- students “referred” from Reading Recovery
- students that have the highest literacy needs on the waiting list.

Students referred to the RTLit service should be those with the highest literacy needs in the school. However, selection for instruction by RTLit should prioritise those with the highest literacy needs in the cluster.

If students are not making expected progress after one year at school the first system support is Reading Recovery (RR). Approximately 70% of primary schools in New Zealand currently offer RR. Schools that don't offer RR will offer a range of other literacy supports to meet the emerging needs of their students after a year at school. Referrals to the RTLit service will most often be for students after their first one or two years of schooling.

A small group of students are “referred from RR” for follow-up support where they have made insufficient progress to be successfully discontinued from RR. It is

important that learning gains made during RR continues to be built on within the classroom but that the student and class teacher are not left without assistance when the student's learning needs persist. Accepting these students on to the RTLit roll may mean that the RTLit, at the soonest practical point in time, works with the student's class teacher to develop a strong individual learning programme for the student.

Students who are learning English as an additional language may be referred to the RTLit service. Some, for example those who are ESOL-funded, may already be receiving language support to supplement effective classroom teaching. The RTLit would need to carefully consider if these students should be prioritised in relation to the support they already receive.

RTLits can use their influence and professional support to assist schools to monitor and evaluate their use of ESOL funding and programmes offered for English language learners.

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## STUDENTS WITH OTHER LEARNING NEEDS

It is assumed that students who are on the RTLit roll have literacy as their primary learning need. However, some students may also have learning needs in other areas and may require additional support from other services e.g. RTLB, ESOL funded.

RTLit might work collaboratively with other support services in order to ensure the individual student's literacy needs are being met. These students will be on the RTLit roll.

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## TARGET GROUPS

Data patterns from a range of sources indicate there are groups of students perpetually over represented in the lowest achieving groups, in particular Māori and Pasifika students. RTLit survey data indicates there have been a smaller proportion of Māori and Pasifika students on the RTLit roll than are on the rolls of the schools from which they are drawn.

RTLit can and should influence the referral decisions that are being made by schools in order to ensure the students with highest literacy needs are being provided with support. RTLit are encouraged to discuss this issue with the school should they notice there is disparity in referrals.

RTLit practices should be culturally responsive to the needs of those students on the roll.

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## THE RTLIT ROLL

Students who are 'on the roll' are those students who are receiving direct or indirect instruction from RTLit. As outlined above, RTLit should only enroll those referred

students with the highest literacy needs and should only work with those students who are formally on the roll.

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## RTLIT WAITING LISTS

Waiting lists reflect situations where referral numbers exceed the ability of the RTLit to enroll these students and commence instruction.

Students on 'the waiting list' are those students who have been referred to RTLit but do not yet have a place on the RTLit roll. Students who are "well below" the appropriate National Standard in reading and writing should be referred to the RTLit waiting list.

By monitoring RTLit waiting lists, RTLit and management committees can gain valuable information on the health of literacy provision within the cluster and, in turn, use their agency to influence referrals to the service.

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## OTHER LITERACY INITIATIVES

RTLit are often invited to work within other literacy initiatives. It is important that literacy initiatives don't take RTLit away from their core work of working with students who are on the RTLit roll.

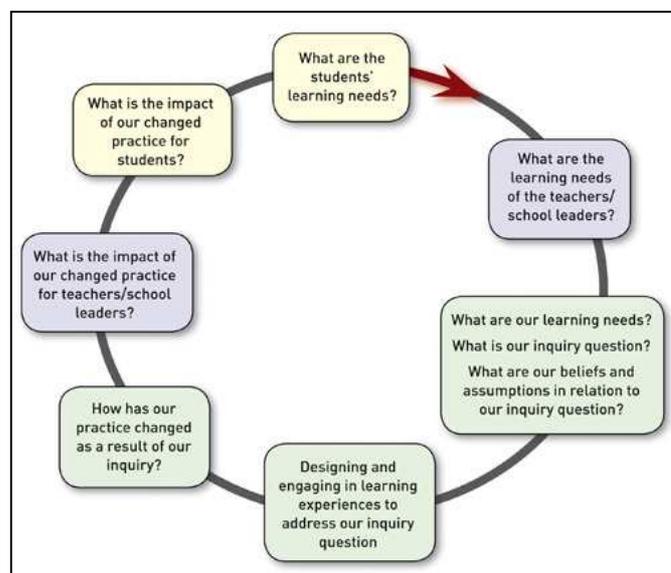
Students selected for other literacy initiatives the school or RTLit may be involved with should be approved by the management committee leadership and be entered on the RTLit roll. They should also be selected according to the priorities for enrolling with RTLit – that they have the highest literacy need in the cluster. Achievement data for these students should be reported in annual reporting to the school, cluster and the Ministry of Education.

## EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

### INQUIRY PROCESS – A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

A key function of the RTLit role is to work collaboratively with the classroom teacher.

A collaborative inquiry approach is one way in which the RTLit and class teacher are able to maintain a consistent and coherent programme to address learning needs.



Together they analyse the student's strengths and needs, determine the subsequent needs of the teacher, plan and deliver the instruction, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their approach. An added advantage of this collaborative approach is that the teachers can transfer new skills and understandings to other teaching contexts for students experiencing literacy difficulties.

Figure 2 - Collaborative Inquiry Learning Model

### DECIDING ON THE MOST APPROPRIATE FORM OF RTLIT INSTRUCTION

The two forms of instruction that may take place for a student on the RTLit roll (direct and indirect instruction) are briefly outlined below. In both cases, the intention is for the student to quickly progress to where they will benefit from effective classroom teaching.

Direct and indirect instruction should be used flexibly and deliberately, based on professional judgment and careful analysis of the student's strengths and needs. Both approaches are recorded in units (or part units) of time.

### INDIRECT INSTRUCTION

The major focus of RTLit work will be in the area of indirect instruction. This involves the RTLit supporting the teacher to deliver appropriately designed learning opportunities within the classroom. The teacher, RTLit (and students) work together. Where a group of students has similar learning needs e.g. a comprehension strategy, they can be grouped for instruction.

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## DIRECT INSTRUCTION

Although used less frequently there may be several reasons for the RTLit choosing to use a brief period of direct instruction. Direct instruction is useful for diagnostic purposes where the RTLit wishes to gain greater insight into the teaching and/or learning. It may also be chosen when the RTLit believes that a short period of intensive teaching is required to break a pattern of the student's ineffective learning behaviour. This teaching may or may not occur within a classroom but regardless should be balanced carefully with the need to enable the student's learning to take place within the normal classroom setting as soon as possible.

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## TIME BOUND INSTRUCTION

The instruction provided by RTLit needs to be time bound to ensure that those students who can benefit from this type of support have access to the service, and fewer students remain on the waiting lists.

There is some indication from analysis the Ministry has undertaken that approximately 45 sessions of work with a student are sufficient to determine whether or not the student is likely to be successfully discontinued in the near future, or will require additional longer-term support. When a period of instruction nears this amount of time, RTLit and management committees should undertake a professional checkpoint to review the student's progress and carefully consider the next steps (see appendix 1 for an example). These are guidelines only and further analysis of future monitoring data will be required to determine optimal service delivery.

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## UNITS OF TIME AND TIMING OF INSTRUCTION

The time parameters outlined in this section are intended to provide RTLit with an opportunity to regularly review and monitor the service being provided for a student on the roll to ensure the individual's needs are being met.

All time an RTLit spends on direct and indirect instruction in regards to a child on the roll should be recorded as units of time. This will allow analysis of impact in relation to time in instruction. Regardless of session length (or whether the session length varies across the time of the intervention) for consistency RTLit are asked to aggregate this time into 30 minute units.

Time recorded should include formal meetings RTLit may have with a teacher to plan and evaluate the progress and programme of learning for a child on the RTLit roll.

Decisions about time need to be planned and deliberate. Length of contact time and the period between collaborative inquiry sessions is important: one session a week may well be too intensive a time period for teachers to integrate new learning within their practice; three weeks may be too long.

The RTLit should also use informed professional judgment to decide on the best session length for optimum learning opportunities for each student. Longer sessions

(beyond 30 minutes) do not necessarily result in increased learning while lessons of a short duration may allow the RTLit to work with more students, but may result in minimal learning for each of those students.

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ROLES

RTLit should only deliver whole school, syndicate, teacher, or teacher aide training, when it is directly related to students on the RTLit roll. When considering tasks that fall outside of this core work, RTLit and management committees will need to consider whether or not it will inadvertently impact on the progress of students on the RTLit roll or waiting list.

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## COMMERCIAL LITERACY PROGRAMMES

If a school or RTLit is considering a commercial literacy programme for a child on the roll, it should be deliberately selected to meet the needs of the child. The RTLit and school should carefully evaluate the ability of a programme to respond to the student's unique learning needs and its effectiveness in terms of outcomes for the student.

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## MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

RTLit are required to monitor and report on student progress to the teacher, the school, the cluster and the Ministry of Education. Information on requirements for reporting to the Ministry is provided directly to RTLit by the Ministry of Education Research Division of the each year.

Throughout a student's programme, the RTLit and class teacher will carefully monitor the student's progress and liaise frequently. This will enable the two teachers to develop consistent expectations for the student's progress and achievement, and allow them to provide multiple opportunities to practice the new learning. Working together in this way will mean the teachers will be best placed to make decisions about what appears to be effective teaching for this student.

RTLit can use their agency to encourage and empower the class teacher and the school to maintain effective monitoring processes once the student is no longer on the RTLit roll.

Regular monitoring and reporting of progress will also ensure that the class teacher and the school will be well informed about the student's progress and decisions to discontinue or refer a student will be deliberate, planned and well communicated throughout the student's time on the RTLit roll .

Relationships with parents, families and whānau of children on the RTLit roll remain the responsibility of the school the child is enrolled in. This includes reporting of progress and achievement.

The RTLit can support the school in this relationship, and encourage meaningful learning-focussed engagement with parents, families and whānau of a child receiving RTLit instruction.

## STUDENTS DISCHARGED FROM THE RTLIT SERVICE

### DEFINITIONS OF STATUS OF 'DISCHARGED' STUDENTS

Historically students who have been taken off the RTLit roll have been described as 'discharged'. In order to assist in identifying those students who have successfully completed their programmes, those who require ongoing assistance, and those who have left the school or district, the following definitions replace the generic term 'discharged' when describing a student's status when they are removed from the roll:

- **'Successfully discontinued'** – when the RTLit judges a student as working at or close to the expected National Standard and able to fully benefit from effective classroom teaching. The goal of RTLit should be to successfully discharge as many students as possible – this will be an indicator of the success of the RTLit service.
- **'Referred on'** – when the RTLit and management committee have made a decision that the student is not making sufficient progress to be successfully discontinued within an appropriate time, and the student needs further intensive support from other services.
- **'Withdrawn'** – when the student is no longer able to receive RTLit instruction (but is not successfully discontinued or referred on), which could be for a variety of reasons e.g. the student, may have left the area.
- **'Rolled over'** – when instruction for the student is to be rolled over into the next year, but data is taken at the end of the year and reported as part of the annual reporting cycle.

### PROCESSES FOR STUDENTS EXITING THE ROLL

While it is recognised that clusters will have a variety of specific procedures regarding removal of a student from the RTLit roll, it is recommended that the RTLit develop a formal process for this to occur. This will ensure that all those concerned with the student's learning are informed about expectations for ongoing support and monitoring. The RTLit may use their agency to encourage the school to hold a case conference for those responsible for the student (e.g. RTLit, classroom teacher, syndicate leader, a school leader, RTLb, parent or whānau member) to ensure that the child has the necessary ongoing support.

## EVALUATION

RTLit should keep sufficient ongoing records to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes through the analysis of student data. Regular monitoring and evaluation will allow RTLit to adjust and refine their programmes to ensure they are effectively meeting the diverse needs of the students on their roll. Establishing 'professional checkpoints' e.g. after 10, 20 and 30 units of instruction, may assist in this process (refer to appendices for an example of a 'professional checkpoint').

## APPENDIX 1

Example - an effective RTLit process for monitoring and reviewing the impact of teaching decisions (developed by RTLits Liz Hansen & Debbie Fitzgerald)

| RTLit Professional Checkpoint  |  |
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| <b>When to do a Professional Checkpoint:</b>   |  |
| <p>At any point when the RTLit is concerned that the student is not making accelerated progress e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After approx session 10</li> <li>• At approx session 30 if it is clear that the student is not making sufficient progress to work at, or close to the appropriate New Zealand Curriculum Standard in Reading or Writing.</li> <li>• At approx session 30 when working indirectly and if it is clear that the PLD needs of the classroom teacher, exceed the 45 sessions available to the target student.</li> </ul> <p>Early review of progress (through a professional checkpoint) allows programme modification with enough time for effective implementation of the modified programme.</p> |  |
| <b>Steps:</b>  |  |
| <p><b>1. Analyse data.</b></p>   | <p>Possible actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoroughly analyse all current assessment data and teaching records, <b>AND</b></li> <li>• collect further assessment information if necessary, <b>AND/OR</b></li> <li>• analyse video of RTLit working directly/indirectly with the student/class teacher <b>OR</b> ask a colleague to observe a session, <b>AND/OR</b></li> <li>• video observation of the student working within the classroom literacy programme or formal written record of an observation of the child working within the classroom literacy programme, <b>AND/OR</b></li> <li>• those involved in the student's literacy learning observe the student being taught (poss. behind the Reading Recovery one way mirror.) <b>AND</b></li> <li>• <b>create an action plan of next steps.</b> Implement action plan for a set period then move to step 2 if required.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>2. Take the case file and discuss with a colleague or Management Committee member.</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solve issues and discuss next steps. Implement recommendations for a set period or move to Step 3.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>3. Hold a checkpoint meeting.</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise a meeting for those involved in the student's literacy learning + SENCO, Principal, Syndicate Leader or Literacy Leader/Management Committee member. All parties bring any current data, evidence of progress, work samples etc.</li> <li>• Create an action plan of next steps. Implement recommendations for a set period or move to Step 4.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>4. Student is referred off the RTLit roll. (Only after all other steps have been actioned)</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school resumes sole responsibility for monitoring the student, continuing with highly effective classroom teaching, while referring the student to an appropriate service for long-term support.</li> </ul>   |

**APPENDIX 2**

Example - process map for RTLit decision making

