

# One Way to Review Your RTLB Cluster

Rubina Wheeler, Lead School Principal, & Paul Mitchell, RTLB Cluster Manager



In June 2014, the Lead School Principals and Cluster Managers from Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) Cluster 16, Hamilton, and RTLB Cluster 20, Rotorua/Taupo discussed the possibility of conducting a review of each other's clusters to inform strategic and annual plans. Being two and a half years since the transformation of the RTLB service in New Zealand/Aotearoa, it seemed timely to get feedback from schools and RTLB about what was valued in the service at the moment, and also to ask for ideas for future focus.

## RTLB Clusters 16 and 20 Review Process

The process started with a meeting to negotiate the scope of the review and the methods to be used. This meeting included Rubina Wheeler and Bruce Walker, Lead School Principals, and Tracy Fraser and Paul Mitchell, Cluster Managers, and was facilitated by the visiting Lead School Principal. The purpose of the review was discussed, and those present were asked to share what they saw the purpose of the review as being. Also discussed were ideas for how to best elicit useful responses from cluster RTLB and principals to inform future focus for improvement to the service, and also what cultural considerations were appropriate when visiting each of the clusters and their schools. It was decided that the negotiated process would be emailed to all cluster schools to inform principals and RTLB of the impending reviews and of their intended purpose.

The Lead School Principal and Cluster Manager from each of the two clusters further negotiated how many school principals in their cluster would be interviewed by the visiting Lead School Principal and Cluster Manager, and how many RTLB would be interviewed. It was also agreed that all cluster school principals and all RTLB should be given the opportunity to submit written responses to the reviewers, using the same questions template that would be used in the interviews.

In selecting which cluster school principals to interview, consideration was given to ensure feedback from schools of varied decile ranking,

and also secondary, intermediate, kura kaupapa Maori and primary schools. In addition to the cluster schools' principals being interviewed, the reviewers also interviewed the Lead School Principal, Cluster Manager, Board of Trustees Chairperson, Lead RTLB and Practice Leaders. Interview questions were given to principals and RTLB prior to the day of the interview to allow for the most considered responses. The review process was conducted over three school days and started with a mihi whakatau to introduce the visiting Lead School Principal and Cluster Manager to all of the cluster's RTLB staff.

Reviewers introduced themselves to the hosting cluster, to put context around the process e.g. "Your cluster has requested a review". Reviewers talked about the possible limitations and benefits of the review, and the interview questions were shared with everyone. All were given electronic and hard copies of the interview questions to complete written responses and email them to the visiting Lead School Principal if they chose to i.e. all RTLB had an opportunity to participate in the review process.

The questions posed in the review were as follows:

- What should RTLB Cluster (NAME) keep doing?
- What should RTLB Cluster (NAME) stop doing?
- What should RTLB Cluster (NAME) start doing?

These questions were chosen to provide opportunities for celebration for what was perceived to be working well with the RTLB service, and also to identify areas for improvement of the RTLB service.

The reviewers further clarified that names and written material on interview forms were to be considered as private. Only summaries of interviews would be shared to allow participants to feel secure that they were able to speak frankly about their experiences of the service and ideas for future focus. There was provision for participants to sign the form if they wished to as some participants were happy to be identified.

RTLB were interviewed singly by either the visiting Lead School Principal or the visiting Cluster Manager,

and Principals were interviewed by both the visiting Cluster Manager and Lead School Principal. At the end of each review day the responses were collated and a tally kept beside each response to show the number of respondents who shared the same thoughts. The views that scored the highest on the tally, feature in that prioritised order in the final report. To be responsive to the review, clusters were invited to consider more popular responses as priorities in their strategic and annual plans. Views that were only expressed by one respondent, and that were contrary to views expressed by more than two respondents, were not included in the report but were brought to the attention of the Lead School Principal and Cluster Manager for their consideration.

Templates to assist with the review process are self-explanatory and included at the end of this article.

Headings in the report were chosen to reflect key messages from feedback in the review i.e. feedback informed the headings used - hence other clusters are likely to need different headings depending on their feedback.

The headings that were used to present ideas for future focus in RTLB Cluster 16 were:

- Effective RTLB work
- Personnel
- Administration
- Finance
- Health and Safety

What was written under these headings for reporting purposes was in the order of how many respondents had given that response i.e. the more respondents who had supported an idea, the closer to the top of the list the idea appeared in the report.

Following the review process and the writing of the report by the two reviewers, the report was shared with the Lead School Principal, Cluster Manager, Lead RTLB/Practice Leaders. At the next full RTLB staff meeting, the report was shared with all of the cluster's RTLB, and the next steps are presenting the review to the Lead School Board of Trustees and then to all of the schools in the cluster, and ensuring the findings of the review are reflected in the strategic and annual plans.

Finally, the management teams of the two clusters are going to meet to share how they have incorporated the review findings into their future planning, and to discuss the perceived benefits and limitations of the review to inform any future review. This review was a first for both clusters and it is not presented as any more than being one aspect of review carried out by both clusters. Already we have discussed the limited scope of our survey, and it is likely that in a future review we will include feedback from parents, teachers and students.

If any clusters would like to try this process for review, and would like electronic copies of the templates included with this article, please email [office@nawton.school.nz](mailto:office@nawton.school.nz). As well as including the templates with this article, RTLB Cluster 16 has included a copy of the final report of its cluster review as an example of what the report can look like, and to enable other clusters to determine the relevance or otherwise of them carrying out a similar review.

## Appendix 1

### RTL B Cluster 16 Review

Date:	Name: (this will be kept confidential, only summarised comments to be shared)	Position within RTL B Cluster 16
Question 1: What should RTL B Cluster 16 <b>Keep</b> doing?		
Question 2: What should RTL B Cluster 16 <b>Stop</b> doing?		
Question 3: What should RTL B Cluster 16 <b>Start</b> doing?		

I agree this is an accurate reflection of the interview.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Bruce Walker / Tracy Fraser

Interviewer

## Appendix 3

### RTL B Cluster 16 Review Summary Report

RTL B CLUSTER 16 REVIEW FEEDBACK SUMMARY : 22 August 2014

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## RTL B CLUSTER 16 REVIEW SUMMARY REPORT

22<sup>nd</sup> August 2014

From 19 to 21 August 2014 the RTL B Cluster 16 participated in a Formal Self Review process. Summarised feedback has been recorded from interviews with RTL B Cluster 16 Leadership team, a selection of RTL B staff and RTL B Cluster 16 Principals over three days in 2014. All staff and schools were given the opportunity to provide feedback using the same interview template via email.

This review was facilitated by Bruce Walker Lead Principal and Tracy Fraser RTL B Cluster 20 Manager, Rotorua Lakes High School.

It is recommended that this feedback is considered in conjunction with the Cluster's ongoing review processes for future planning.

**Celebrating Good Practice** is feedback gained regarding areas stakeholders saw as effective and wanted to keep and has been recorded in order of priorities as identified by the Cluster feedback under the following headings:

1. Systems
2. Effective Practice
3. Cluster Culture
4. Leadership
5. Finance

**Future Focus** is feedback gained regarding areas stakeholders saw as future areas for development and has been recorded in order of priorities as identified by the Cluster feedback under the following headings:


1. Effective Practice
2. Systems
3. Leadership
4. Cluster Culture
5. Finance

We would like to thank Cluster 16 for inviting us both to participate in this Self Review process and wish you well in your journey of continuing to provide an effective and responsive RTL B Service to students, families and schools.

*"Kia kotahi te hoe ka tae ki uta"*



Bruce Walker  
Lead Principal  
RTL B Cluster 20  
Rotorua Lakes High School



Tracy Fraser  
Cluster Manager  
RTL B Cluster 20

### **CELEBRATING GOOD PRACTICE:**

*Celebrating Good Practice* is feedback gained regarding areas stakeholders saw as effective and wanted to keep.

#### **Systems**

- Appointment of high quality RTL B to suit identified Cluster needs
- Cluster 16 website for referrals, reporting, and communication
- Professional Development delivery meeting identified Cluster 16 needs
- RTL B liaison with schools
- Equity of service delivery across the Cluster
- School-based RTL B across school settings, ie. Primary, Intermediate, Secondary and Kura
- Weekly review and intake meetings
- Regular all-in meetings
- Clear and comprehensive appraisal process

#### **Effective Practice**

- Induction and mentoring practices
- Rotation of RTL B participation in weekly review and intake meetings
- Peer supervision development
- Management and tailoring of caseload to allow for individual RTL B needs
- Transitioning of students between Cluster schools
- The matching of RTL B expertise and skills with the needs of students and teachers
- Provision of variety, flexibility and equity of casework allocation
- Provision of one-on-one service for students with high learning needs

#### **Cluster Culture**

- Open and supportive management team
- Cluster 16 operates with a High Trust model
- The development of a collaborative culture among Cluster 16 RTL B
- A high expectation of service delivery to all Cluster schools
- An established culture of feedback and support from Board of Trustees
- Obvious culture of care/manaakitanga and tikanga

#### **Leadership**

- Delegated leadership structure utilises internal strengths
- Open, transparent and collaborative leadership team
- Leadership team committed to promoting/employing Maori practitioners and fluent speakers of Te Reo Maori

### **Finance**

- Cluster is strategically resourced according to identified needs
- Equitable and transparent distribution of LSF and Year 11-13 Funding

### **FUTURE FOCUS FEEDBACK:**

*Future Focus* is feedback gained regarding areas stakeholders saw as future areas for development

### **Effective Practice**

- Focus on effective RTL B practice to ensure consistency of service delivery
- Research efficacy of interventions and programmes to best meet student needs
- Analyse Cluster-wide needs to inform Cluster strategic planning
- Encourage innovation to raise student achievement and teacher capacity
- Further develop Te Reo Maori with RTL B
- Inter-Cluster collaboration to share Professional Development and best practice
- Review most appropriate delivery to Kura

### **Systems**

- Use self-review, data and evidence to inform next strategic plan based on identified Cluster need
- Continue to develop the website to enhance analysis, ensure efficacy of service, reporting, communication, administration and finance
- Meet Cluster Principals annually to consult with and inform the Strategic Plan and receive information
- Transparency - review workload allocation process to reflect equity

### **Leadership**

- Review format/purpose of meetings
- Ensure appointments reflect the needs of Cluster 16
- Address performance management issues

### **Cluster Culture**

- Clarify the Cluster 16 name, vision, whakatauki, mission and logo
- Celebrate good practice of RTL B and Cluster 16 success

**Finance**

- Ensure clarity and transparency in financial management and budgeting
- Review travel reimbursement guidelines
- Review reimbursements of consumable purchases

## AUTHOR PROFILES

### Rubina Wheeler



(Left to Right) Paul Mitchell, Rubina Wheeler,  
Tracy Foster, Bruce Walker

**Rubina Wheeler** is Principal of Nawton school in Hamilton, is Lead School Principal for RTLB Cluster 16, serving 77 schools and 37 cluster staff.

*Ko Tainui tōku waka,  
Ko Whatihua tōku tāngata,  
Ko Taupiri tōku maunga,  
Ko Waikato tōku awa,  
Ko Ngati Apakura tōku iwi,  
Ko Hinetu tōku hapu,  
Ko Kahotea tōku marae,  
No Otorohanga ahau,  
Kei Kīwikīroa tōku kaainga inaianei,  
Ko Jenny Manaia rāua ko Thomas Charman ōku Mātua,  
Ko Warren Wheeler taku tāne,  
Ko Rubina Wheeler ahau.  
Ko Raymond, Te Winika rāua ko Rickson,  
Panehuru aku tama.*

**Email:**

principal@nawton.schoo.nz

**Paul Mitchell** enjoys his role as Cluster Manager in RTLB Cluster 16. He values the professional relationship he has with the Lead School Principal and Board of Trustees of Nawton School and sees these relationships as pivotal to maintaining and improving an effective service.

The success highlighted in the cluster review reflect the dedication and expertise of a wonderful team of RTLB.

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