

# Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters

April 2018



**Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa**

**The Child – the Heart of the Matter**

[www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz)

Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters

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## Rationale for this evaluation

In 2004 ERO investigated the quality of RTLB service delivery in 40 (20 percent) of the then 199 clusters. The report highlighted a need for more consistency in delivery of the RTLB service across New Zealand. ERO made recommendations for improvement to the service's management and accountability including:

- improving oversight of the quality and consistency of the service
- providing improved supervision and support for RTLB practitioners
- increasing the effectiveness of services for Māori students.

In response to ERO's 2004 report, the Ministry formed an RTLB Project Team to develop the *Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) Policy and Toolkit (2007)*. This document provided schools with improved guidelines for the management and accountability of the RTLB service.

In 2009 ERO reviewed the RTLB service again. This review focused on the governance and management of a sample of 40 RTLB clusters (20 percent). ERO found little had changed from 2004, largely because the governance and management structures had not changed, despite the publication of the toolkit in 2007.

ERO made the following recommendations:

*ERO recommends that in the short term the Ministry of Education and RTLB clusters use the findings of this evaluation to address identified issues to improve the governance and management of clusters.*

*ERO recommends that in the medium term the Ministry of Education initiates a review of the current RTLB cluster model to determine the best approach to governing and managing the RTLB service in the context of the wider special education provision.*

The Ministry responded to ERO's 2009 evaluation by undertaking a substantive transformation of the RTLB service. This transformation saw the number of RTLB clusters reduced to 40, with each cluster attached to a lead school/kura whose board of trustees was responsible for overall governance of the service. Cluster managers (one for each cluster) have responsibility for day-to-day management, working closely with the lead school principal.

In discussion with the Ministry, a decision was made to undertake another evaluation in 2017 to evaluate the impact of the transformation on the service. This evaluation took place at a time when there was considerable change happening in the Ministry in relation to Learning Support including re-structuring Learning Support staff into 10 regions and creating regional Learning Support Manager roles.



## What did ERO do?

This evaluation included all 40 RTLB clusters. The data gathering took place in two phases. The first phase was a trial of the approach in two RTLB clusters in early May 2017. The trial provided an opportunity to test the evaluation framework, approach to scoping, data gathering, exit discussion and analysis of data using a synthesis rubric.<sup>1</sup> The second phase took place from mid-June to late-September 2017 and involved the project team evaluating the remaining 38 RTLB clusters.

In this evaluation, ERO asked the following questions:<sup>2</sup>

- To what extent has the quality and consistency of RTLB cluster governance and management improved to address the issues identified in ERO's 2009 evaluation?
- To what extent has the transformation of the RTLB service contributed to increased capability and capacity within clusters, to monitor and evaluate practice and service provision to identify what is working well and what needs to improve?
- How are RTLB clusters involved with Kāhui Ako, and how is the relationship developing? What is working well and what are the challenges?
- What contribution is the RTLB service making to the wider provision of learning support?
- What evidence is there of the impact of the RTLB service on improving learner outcomes?

The Ministry of Education and an External Reference Group made up of four RTLB cluster managers, four lead school principals and a representative from the RTLB Association were involved in developing these questions.

### *ERO's Approach to data gathering*

ERO considered information from a variety of sources. Meetings were held with key stakeholders including representatives from cluster schools and kura (including principals/tumuaki) and Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCO) or their equivalent, and cluster managers, lead school board of trustees, lead school principals, practice leaders, groups of RTLB.<sup>3</sup> At the end of each onsite phase ERO evaluators met with the cluster manager, lead school principal and a lead school board member to discuss the tentative findings for their cluster. This 'exit meeting' focused on:

- ERO's tentative judgements for the cluster in relation to the synthesis rubric
- clarifying and testing ERO's findings, sharing strengths and areas for improvement in the cluster
- checking the nature and accuracy of information gathered about the cluster's involvement with Communities of Learning|Kāhui Ako.

ERO also analysed cluster documentation, including internal evaluation information, monitoring and reporting and operational policies and procedures.

A rubric was used as a tool to synthesise the findings in each cluster review. The rubric was based on the one used in the 2009 ERO evaluation, with refinements made to reflect the current RTLB

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 5 for the RTLB Synthesis Rubric.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 4 for the Evaluation Framework and Investigative Prompts.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 3 for information about meetings with key stakeholders.

cluster model and broad expectations in the [Funding and Service Agreement](#). The synthesis rubric was the basis of reviewers' judgments about the performance of each cluster. These judgements were moderated as part of ERO's quality assurance process. Moderation of the judgments took place mid way through the reviews, and at the end when ERO had visited all 40 clusters. The evidence gathered in each cluster review and the criteria in the rubric were used for the moderation process. This national evaluation report pulls together the overall findings.



## Overview of findings

This evaluation focuses on the governance and management of the [Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour \(RTLB\)](#) service. It follows on from an Education Review Office (ERO) evaluation in 2009 that recommended improvements to the quality and consistency of the service. The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) responded to the evaluation by undertaking a substantive transformation of the RTLB service in 2012 which provided a new model and structure for the service. This transformation has been successful in addressing the majority of concerns ERO reported in 2009.

The RTLB service aims to improve learning and teaching for students with learning or behaviour difficulties. RTLB are a group of trained itinerant specialist teachers, working across clusters of schools, who provide support to ensure good educational outcomes for Years 1-10 students. There are nearly 1000 RTLB in New Zealand today, working in 40 clusters throughout the country. RTLB services are managed by full-time cluster managers, situated in 40 lead schools/kura. The Ministry funds the RTLB service at a cost of approximately \$90 million per annum.

ERO's findings highlight very positive improvements to the quality and consistency of the RTLB service, especially in overall governance and management. This is largely attributed to the new structure that brings cluster managers, lead school boards of trustees and lead school principals together within clearly defined roles and responsibilities to lead, govern and manage the service. Cluster leadership is also a key factor in the transformation of the service. A reduction in the number of clusters (199 to 40) has enabled schools to have access to a wider pool of RTLB expertise. However it has also created some geographical challenges in areas where schools in a cluster are quite spread out, with long-distance travel a reality for some RTLB. These challenges have been addressed through an RTLB liaison role that has minimised isolation for some schools and kura and supported access to the service for students with learning and behaviour needs.

The RTLB service is making a valued contribution to the wider provision of learning support in our education system. The service is also taking a pro-active approach to engaging with Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako (Kāhui Ako).

### Well governed and managed clusters

Almost all clusters were found to be well governed and managed. Documentation and practice clearly aligned to requirements set out by the Ministry. Roles and responsibilities were well defined and understood, and evident in practice. Comprehensive planning and reporting, along with ongoing monitoring and review, supported decision making and improvements in many clusters. Although some clusters were starting to implement a more evaluative approach to this improvement, most were at an early stage with developing capacity and capability to evaluate service provision and RTLB practice.

Most clusters were using the [RTLB Outcomes Framework](#) in the [Professional Practice Toolkit](#) as required in their casework - gathering and reporting pre and post data for each intervention. However the data was not so useful when aggregated to report at a cluster level and to the Ministry. ERO identified issues with the broad, subjective nature of the outcomes framework along with issues related to the aggregation of pre and post data. When outcomes data was averaged for all students or cohorts of students, it was meaningless without clear expectations about what constituted appropriate gains on the 10 point scale and a narrative explaining the impact of the

intervention. This evaluation highlights some challenges for the RTLB service in evaluating the impact of the service for both short-term and longer-term outcomes for learners.

Generally clusters were well led, with many taking a distributed approach to leadership. Practice leaders played a key role in supporting and building RTLB capability. Some RTLB took on additional responsibilities that reflected national priorities and cluster needs. Leaders promoted high levels of trust and respect and strengthened professional relationships at all levels of the cluster. Many clusters still needed to strengthen relationships with iwi and early learning services.

ERO found most clusters were providing a highly responsive service and this was largely attributed to good leadership, the highly valued RTLB liaison role, well-known referral processes and effective monitoring of case work.

The RTLB liaison role was a critical part of the service - developing professional relationships, providing ongoing support, and maintaining good communication with clusters, schools and kura. As a result, requests for support included sufficient information to enable prioritisation and effective decision making.

Personnel management was a strong feature of most clusters. Robust practices included implementation of recently reviewed appraisal systems, the strategic recruitment of RTLB, and RTLB professional development that was well aligned to cluster priorities. RTLB were well supported through induction programmes and targeted professional development, along with coaching and professional supervision on an individual needs basis. ERO found a strong culture of reflection in the RTLB teams, led and supported by practice leaders. The professional role of RTLB was highly evident in most of the clusters.

Most clusters were proactive in their approach to working with Ministry and other external agencies. However, a common issue for many clusters was frustration with other agencies not being sufficiently responsive to the increasing needs of learners, especially when these often sat outside of the scope of RTLB work. Changes to [Learning Support](#) (previously known as Special Education) regional Ministry offices during the time of ERO's evaluation were affecting the extent to which RTLB and the Ministry were able to successfully collaborate to provide a seamless service. Leaders in some RTLB clusters were minimising the impact of such changes by maintaining established relationships with key frontline staff or developing new relationships in flexible and responsive ways.

### **Not so well governed and managed clusters**

The RTLB clusters (four) that were not so well governed and managed had several aspects of practice in common. Most were well placed to improve because of recent changes in leadership or because of specific interventions in place.

Personnel management in these clusters was not sufficiently robust to address issues of inconsistent RTLB practice. Some were in the process of reviewing personnel management processes, for example in areas of recruitment, induction, appraisal and supervision, to improve the capability and capacity of the service to respond to the needs of schools and kura. A few were also working on improving team culture and repairing internal relationships.

Most of these clusters were yet to fully engage with the [RTLB Outcomes Framework](#) and lacked collated and analysed cluster data. They tended to be at an early stage with using the RTLB



database.<sup>4</sup> Internal evaluation was not well understood and ERO found a lack of strong monitoring, reviewing and reporting. These clusters need additional support from the Ministry to ensure they are meeting their responsibilities as set out in the [Funding and Service agreement](#).

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<sup>4</sup> There are two RTLB databases available through private providers who contract services to RTLB clusters.

## Findings

The findings reported in this section are structured around the five evaluation questions.

### Cluster governance and management

*To what extent has the quality and consistency of RTLB cluster governance and management improved to address the issues identified in ERO’s 2009 evaluation?*

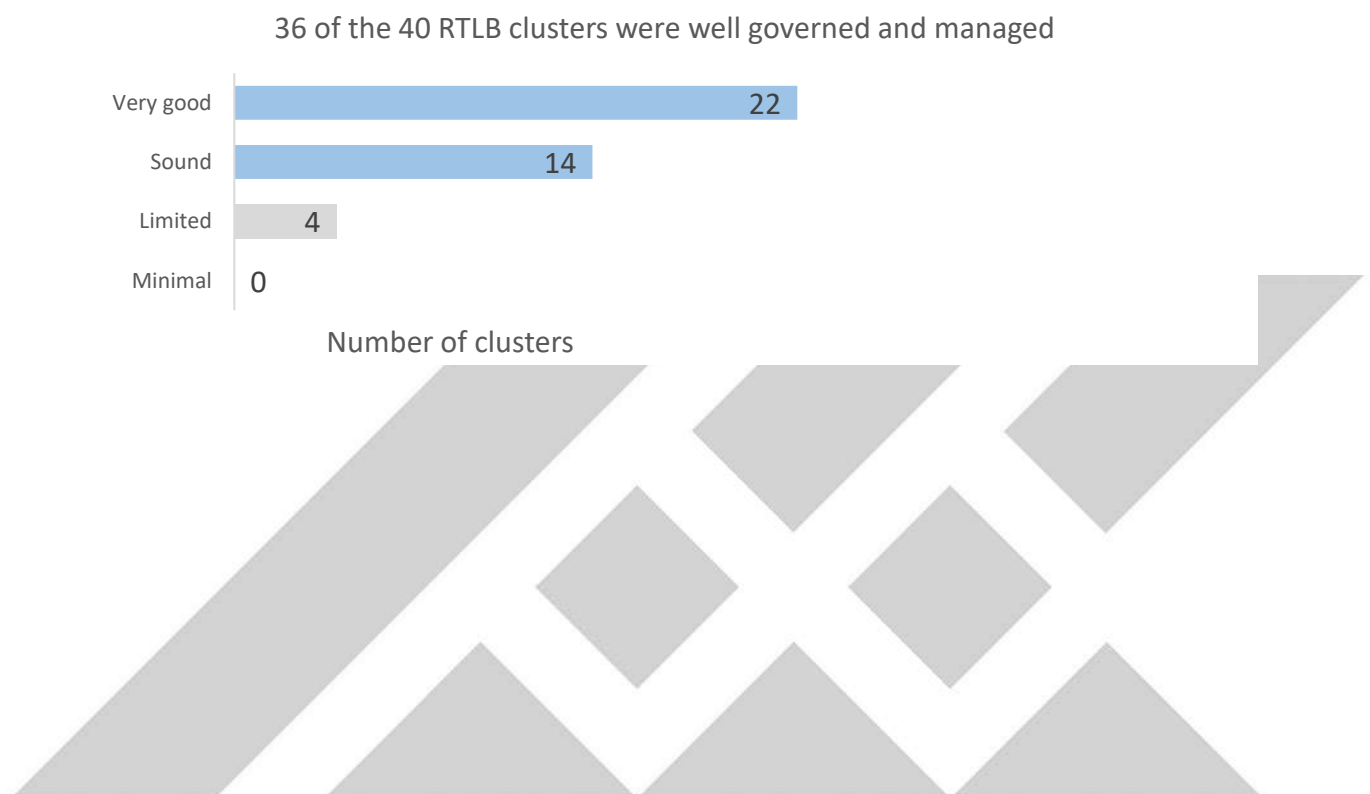
ERO’s findings show a

substantial improvement in the quality and consistency of the governance and management of the RTLB service. The 2012 transformation has successfully addressed most of the issues identified in the 2009 evaluation. ERO attributes this improvement to the following factors:

- effective leadership of the transformation through changes to the leadership of RTLB clusters, including the appointment of cluster managers and lead schools (boards of trustees and principals), and opportunities for RTLB to step up into leadership roles (practice leaders and RTLB areas of responsibility)
- a reduction in the number of clusters resulting in clusters with larger ‘pools of RTLB’ expertise to draw on in undertaking the much widened scope of the RTLB role
- a high level of adherence to the guidance and expectations for how RTLB clusters are governed and managed, and for the professional practice of RTLB.

As shown in Figure 1, ERO found that 36 of the 40 RTLB clusters were well governed and managed. The focus of the transformation of the service on structures, systems and processes has led to these improvements. In most clusters, ERO found well-documented policies and procedures which guided day-to-day operation of the service; improved processes to support cluster schools and kura to access the service; and better people management (RTLB) in terms of appraisal, professional development, induction, mentoring and supervision.

**Figure 1: Cluster governance and management**



The following section highlights ERO’s findings for each of the following dimensions:

- operating according to requirements
- internal evaluation (self review), planning and reporting
- access to service
- personnel management and professional support
- professional relationships
- communication
- leadership.

Two dimensions of the rubric ERO used (*seamless collaboration with the Ministry of Education* and *outcomes for learners*) are not reported on here, as the findings are included in subsequent sections of the report.

### Operates according to requirements

ERO found considerable improvement in the extent to which RTLB clusters were operating according to the requirements of the Funding and Service Agreement and guidance documents (see Figure 2 and Table 1). Most clusters were working within the guidelines and expectations set out in [Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters](#) and the [Professional Practice Toolkit](#). Annual and quarterly reporting to the Ministry provides an accountability mechanism for clusters. ERO noted some variability in the quality of reporting and in understanding the requirements. Understanding and awareness of specific expectations in the Funding and Service Agreement was limited in a few clusters. Also the interpretation of the Agreement varied in some clusters, particularly in relation to the level of detail required when reporting to the lead school board of trustees and wider community. This is an area for the Ministry to work on with clusters in light of the [Funding Agreement](#) (renewed to 31 December 2019) and the responsibilities it sets out.

**Figure 2: Operates according to requirements**



The following table shows the key shifts in relation to RTLB clusters operating according to requirements.

**Table 1: Shifts from 2009 to 2017 – operating according to requirements**

From (2009)	To (2017)
Poor governance and management practices impacting on RTLB service quality, particularly management of RTLB.	Well-implemented, comprehensive policies and processes support cluster governance and management.
Lack of awareness of, and adherence, to the Ministry of Education’s Policy Toolkit (2007).	Regularly-reviewed policies and procedures leading to improved personnel management.
Limited systems (Ministry of Education) to monitor how well clusters were meeting policy requirements.	Most clusters operating within Ministry of Education agreement, guidelines and expectations.  Strengthened accountability through annual and quarterly reporting to Ministry of Education.

[Regular National Forums](#) provided opportunities for cluster managers and lead school principals to meet and discuss matters of interest. The Ministry also provided some support for clusters, particularly just before the ERO evaluation.

Over the course of this evaluation ERO noted that some clusters had or were experiencing changes in cluster manager and/or lead school/kura. While such changes were mostly well managed within the cluster, the Ministry does not have processes in place to make sure new cluster managers and lead schools are well supported when such changes occur.

ERO found tight accountabilities and reporting for [Learning Support Funding](#) (LSF) and [Year 11 to 13 funding](#) for schools and kura. However clusters were not using the reports to evaluate the difference this funding was making for learners. In many clusters the LSF funding was seen as a source of funding for teacher aides. Clusters need to be assured this funding is bringing about the outcomes expected, for whom it is intended.

### *Next steps for improvement*

The Ministry considers developing and implementing a formal induction process for new cluster managers, lead school principals and boards of trustees when personnel change.

## **Internal evaluation, planning and reporting**

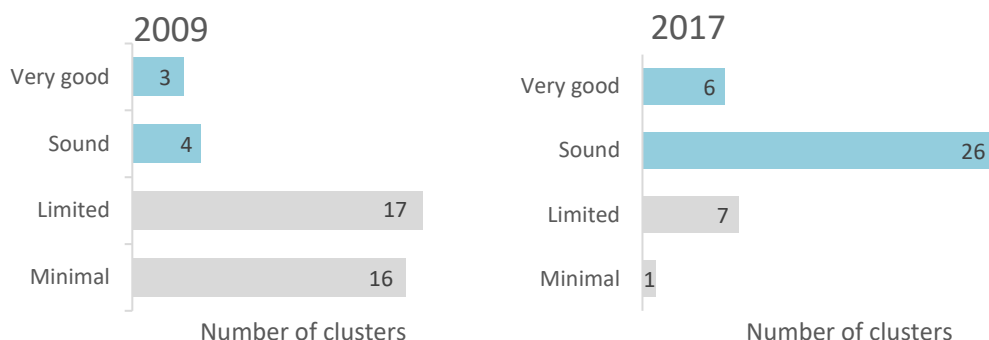
ERO found some positive improvements in this aspect of performance, particularly for cluster planning and reporting. Most clusters aligned their strategic and annual planning to reflect cluster needs and national priorities. Although the quality, nature and extent of reporting varied, most clusters were meeting Ministry requirements.

Some clusters were beginning to develop the capability and capacity to evaluate, however, internal evaluation was not sufficiently robust to provide evidence of the impact of the work of RTLB on learner outcomes.

As shown in Figure 3, there is still work to be done to strengthen this aspect of cluster governance and management.

**Figure 3: Internal evaluation, planning and reporting**

Overall clusters are now better at internal evaluation, planning and reporting than in 2009



The following table shows the key shifts.

**Table 2: Shifts from 2009 to 2017 internal evaluation, planning and reporting**

From (2009)	To (2017)
Strategic and annual planning not informed by systematic self-review processes.	In most clusters strategic and annual planning reflected cluster needs and national priorities.
Issues with the quality and accuracy of data reported.	Improved and clearer expectations for reporting. Still some concerns about the quality of data reported.
Most clusters did not have a good understanding of self review, planning and reporting as it pertains to the RTLB service.	Increased understanding of monitoring and review, and requirements for planning and reporting.
Self review was not seen as relevant or useful in many clusters.	Clusters are beginning to develop the capability and capacity to engage in robust internal evaluation.

Clusters were reporting quarterly and annually to the Ministry, however this information was not being analysed and used by the Ministry to provide system-level information about the RTLB service in terms of service provision and improved outcomes.

See the section *Capability and capacity to monitor and evaluate* for further findings.

*Next steps for improvement*

RTLB clusters to build their capacity and capability for internal evaluation focusing on impact for learners and teachers.

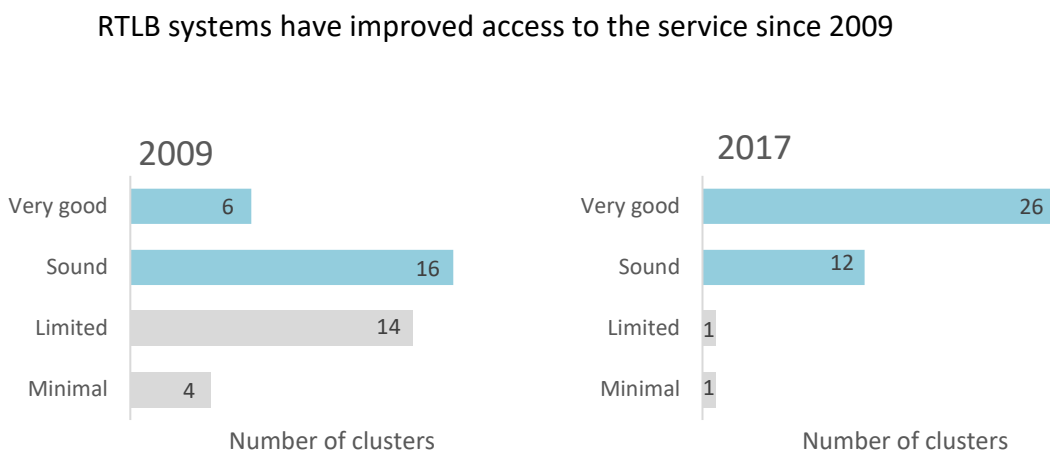
The Ministry uses reporting information to generate system-level information about the impact of the RTLB service.

**Access to RTLB service**

In most RTLB clusters, school and kura personnel knew how to access the service and found the online request for support system easy to use. As shown in Figure 4, 38 of the 40 clusters had systems and processes to provide very good or sound access to the service. The RTLB liaison role

was key for supporting access to the service. The liaison RTLB worked with SENCO to make sure requests for support fitted with the scope of the RTLB role.

**Figure 4: Access to RTLB service**



ERO found increasing use of the RTLB service by kura and wharekura in some clusters. This use was very much dependent on the capability of RTLB to work in Māori immersion settings and the ways cluster managers were building relationships with tumuaki and kaiako in kura and wharekura. Cluster managers were acutely aware of the need to build RTLB capability and cluster capacity to work in Māori immersion settings. ERO identified some barriers for Māori-immersion kura and wharekura regarding equitable access to the service. This was largely because the referral system and associated databases have been set up for English-medium schools. These systems are not relevant for Māori immersion kura and wharekura as they are not aligned to curriculum frameworks or assessment tools used in Māori immersion settings.

In many clusters, managers and practice leaders effectively monitored caseloads. Some were using a points or rating system to allocate cases and projects to individual RTLB. ERO found variability across clusters in their analysis of case work and referral data for patterns and trends, and in the use and reporting of this information. Some clusters were also seeking feedback on the quality of RTLB service delivery from school and kura personnel (teachers/kaiako and SENCO) at the time of case closure. This feedback is a rich source of information that could potentially contribute to evaluation of service provision and RTLB practice.

The following table shows the key shifts in access to the RTLB service.

**Table 3: Shifts from 2009 to 2017 – Access to service**

From (2009)	To (2017)
Management of access to the service was highly variable.	Access to the service is well managed through cluster systems and processes that were well known and used.
Processes for accessing the service were not well known or transparent in all clusters.	The RTLB liaison role was key to schools and kura accessing the service and building a clear understanding of the scope of the RTLB role.
Misunderstandings or misconceptions of the RTLB role were having a negative impact on the use of the service by some schools.	Cluster managers and practice leaders were highly focused on monitoring RTLB case work and caseloads. This had a positive impact on ongoing access to the service by schools and kura.
Lack of monitoring of RTLB practice.	

ERO identified a trend across the clusters that showed about 75 percent of requests for support were for boys. Discussions in some clusters indicated a level of acceptance that this was the case. Little was being done to explore why this was so or what was working or not working to improve outcomes for boys. It is interesting to note that the Funding Agreement does not include boys as a specific priority group in its Service Priorities.

An analysis of the nature of requests for support in a sample of RTLB clusters showed that ‘learning’ or ‘learning and behaviour’ made up the bulk of requests. Referrals for ‘behaviour issues’ tended to be much fewer than for learning related categories. This is an area that clusters might want to explore further.

ERO found mixed views about how well the RTLB service was working in the secondary school context. Several clusters were trialling different approaches to RTLB in secondary schools. Principals and SENCO highlighted that RTLB credibility to work in secondary schools and a teaching background in this context was desirable. Some principals wanted a different approach for secondary schools, including a view that giving the funding to individual schools would be the best solution.

ERO identified variability across the 40 clusters in the following areas:

- case length (15 to 40 plus weeks)
- frequency of referral and intake meetings (weekly to six weekly)
- the involvement of Regional Ministry of Education Learning Support managers in referral and intake meetings
- the extent to which clusters were monitoring, analysing and reporting on referral data and case work.

### *Next steps for improvement*

RTLB clusters ensure equitable access to the service for all schools and kura, by identifying enablers and barriers to access as part of their internal evaluation.

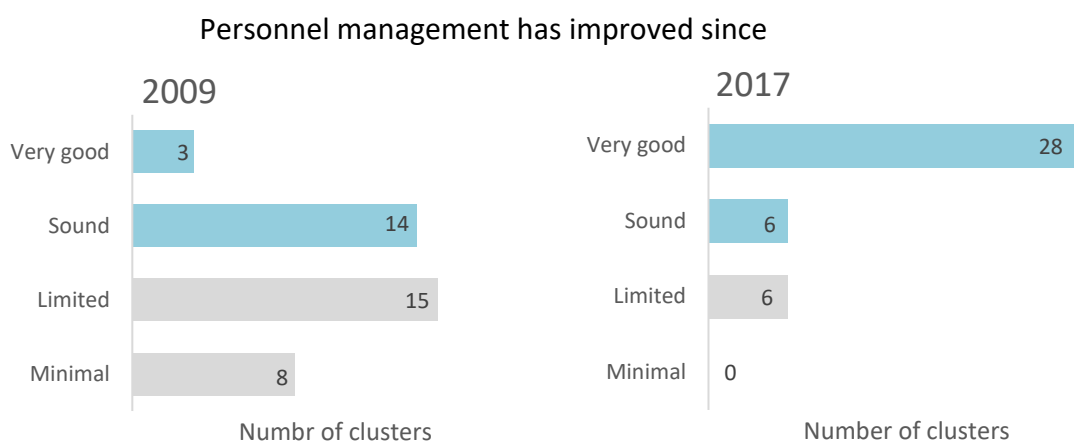
RTLB clusters evaluate the impact of their interventions, programmes and initiatives for improving learning and wellbeing outcomes for boys.

RTLB cluster managers discuss the variability in practice (identified above) to determine if there is a need for clearer expectations and parameters.

## **Personnel management**

ERO found a very positive shift in personnel management through the transformation process. As shown in Figure 5, most (34) clusters were managing people well. Some had recently reviewed their appraisal processes, resulting in a more robust approach aligned to recent changes to requirements from the [Education Council](#). ERO also found many clusters had adopted a strategic approach to appointing new RTLB based on cluster needs. They would not appoint unless they had the right person with the right fit of capabilities they were looking for.

### Figure 5: Personnel management



In most clusters induction and mentoring processes were well embedded and personalised for individual RTLB. RTLB had multiple pathways through which they accessed supervision including one to one with a practice leader or cluster manager, peer supervision and external supervision. Practice leaders played a key role in supporting and growing RTLB capability.

In some clusters, RTLB had opportunities to share practice and reflect on case work through Communities of Practice or other similar professional learning groups. Professional development was clearly linked to cluster priorities and RTLB needs. Such development was valued and responsive. Learning opportunities were collegial, drawing on RTLB expertise, along with access to external expertise when needed.

Where ERO found personnel management was ‘limited’ the issues identified included one or more of the following:

- appraisal not formalised or sufficiently robust, particularly where there were also issues with RTLB performance and practice
- supervision was not linked to the [Professional Practice Toolkit](#)
- teething issues with the implementation of new personnel management systems, for example appraisal processes
- ongoing relationship issues within the RTLB cluster impacting on service provision.

The following table shows the key shifts for personnel management.





**Table 4: Shifts from 2009 to 2017 – Personnel management**

From (2009)	To (2017)
Personnel practices not in accordance with RTLB policy.	Robust policies and procedures, well implemented and clearly aligned to Ministry expectations and requirements.
Not all RTLB getting their entitlements in relation to appraisal, professional development and professional supervision.	Ongoing improvement to RTLB practice and capability through up-to-date processes for appraisal, professional development and supervision.
Issues with RTLB not undertaking their work in a professional manner.	Highly professional RTLB workforce in most clusters.

### *Next steps for improvement*

Next steps in a few clusters include one or more of the following:

- increasing access to supervision
- ensuring access to cultural supervision for Māori and Pacific RTLB
- providing the opportunity for Māori RTLB to be appraised by Māori
- strengthening appraisal and fully implementing new/revised processes
- including a focus on the role and responsibilities of practice leaders in their appraisal
- building RTLB capability to mentor their peers
- addressing the resistance of a few RTLB to change.

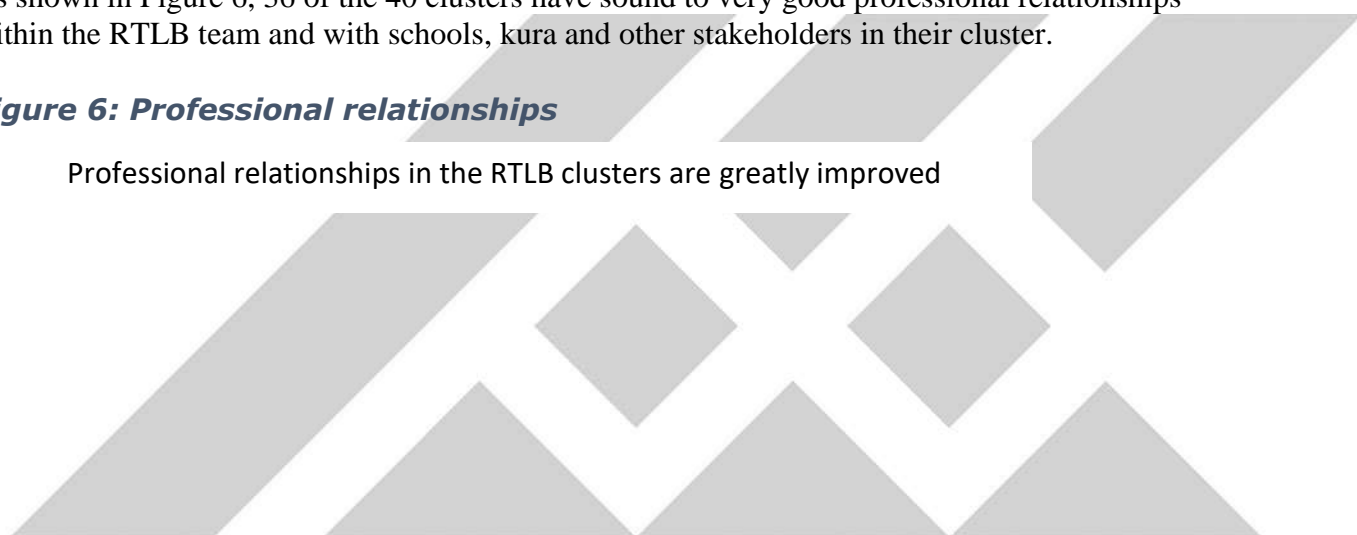
## **Professional relationships**

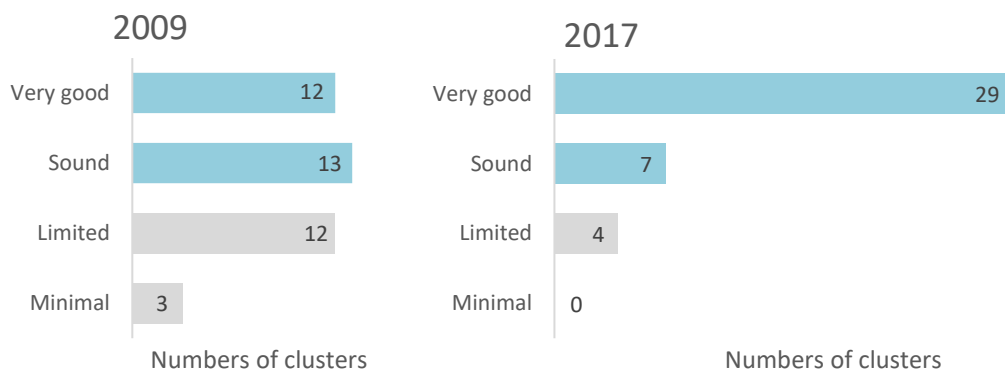
ERO found evidence of strong professional relationships in most clusters. Where these were found to be ‘very good’ they were strong at all levels of the cluster. Cluster managers were proactive in developing and maintaining relationships. This has been a strong focus as part of the transformation process. The RTLB liaison role was pivotal in promoting and maintaining positive working relationships with SENCO and principals in individual schools/kura. Cluster Advisory Groups (CAG), where these existed, were an important forum for fostering professional relationships across the cluster.

As shown in Figure 6, 36 of the 40 clusters have sound to very good professional relationships within the RTLB team and with schools, kura and other stakeholders in their cluster.

### **Figure 6: Professional relationships**

Professional relationships in the RTLB clusters are greatly improved





The following table shows the key shifts in professional relationships.

**Table 5: Shifts from 2009 to 2017 –Professional relationships**

From (2009)	To (2017)
Professional relationships were a positive feature of many clusters and this was largely because of the personal qualities of individuals.	Professional relationships continue to be a strength of most clusters and these have been strengthened through the transformation process.
Where relationship issues existed they were often deeply embedded in the culture of the cluster and were negatively impacting on the quality of the RTLB service.	Cluster managers have been a key influence in strengthening and sustaining professional relationships at all levels of the cluster.
	Professional relationships need strengthening in a few clusters.

In the few clusters where ERO found professional relationship issues, these were impacting negatively on the cluster. However, the extent of these issues varied and new leadership or mediation interventions in place in these clusters were helping to bring about improvement.

*Next steps for improvement*

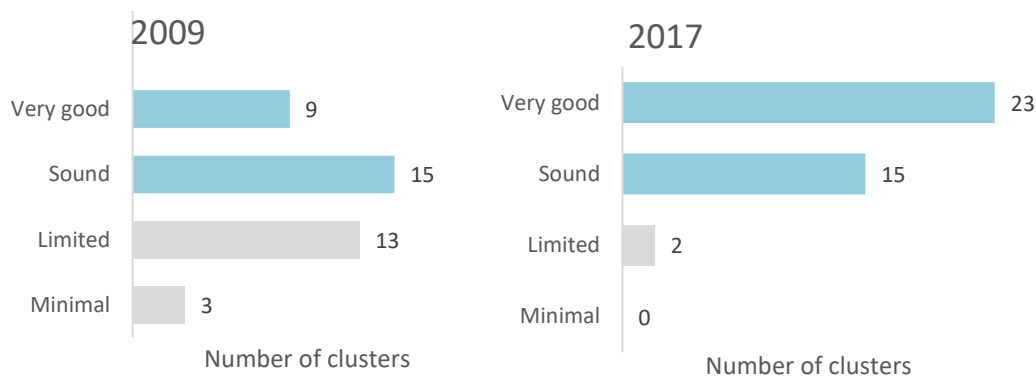
The Ministry monitors the situation in the RTLB clusters where relationship issues have the potential to impact on service provision and RTLB practice and provides support and guidance as needed.

**Communication**

Communication was a positive feature of the way most clusters operated. Communication was multi-faceted, acknowledging face-to-face interactions were really important. The visibility of the cluster manager through regular visits to schools and kura, and at meetings of various groups within the cluster was also important. Regular newsletters, emails and feedback via CAGs (where these existed) helped to keep schools and kura informed about what was happening in the cluster. Figure 7 shows the positive shifts from 2009 to 2017, with 37 of the 40 clusters having sound to very good communication.

**Figure 7: Communication**

Communication has much improved since 2009



The following table shows the key shifts in relation to communication.

**Table 6: Shifts from 2009 to 2017 – Communication**

From (2009)	To (2017)
<p>Effective communication activities kept all involved in the cluster well informed.</p> <p>Where communication was poor it led to lack of involvement and participation of schools in the cluster, and unrealistic expectations of RTLB and under-utilisation of the service.</p>	<p>Clusters taking a multi-faceted approach to communication using differentiated approaches to suit different contexts.</p> <p>Communication clearly promoting high levels of participation in and use of the RTLB service.</p>

A challenge for many clusters was to broaden communication activities to include iwi and early learning services as required in the Funding and Service Agreement. In a few clusters, improved communication could help address misunderstandings about the role of the RTLB and what the service provides.

*Next steps for improvement*

RTLB clusters broaden and improve communication activities to include iwi and early learning services involved in transition support projects and to address misunderstandings about the role of RTLB and what the service provides.

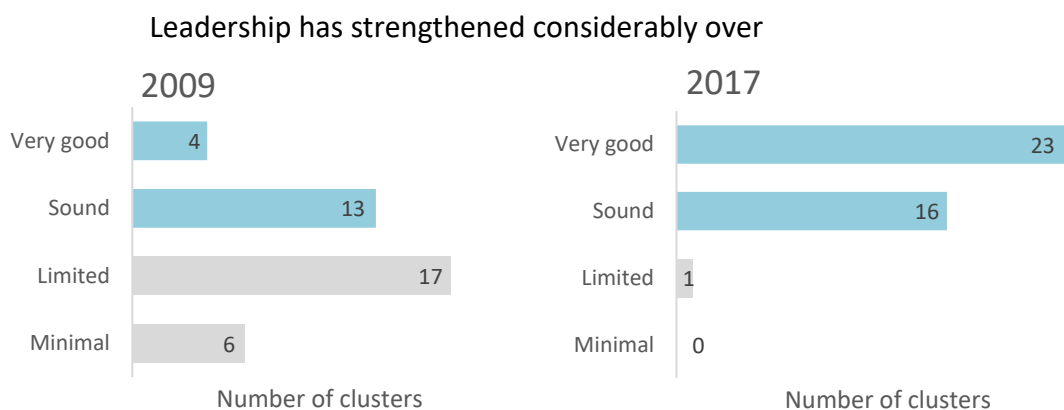
**Leadership**

Leadership, particularly by cluster managers and lead school principals, was a key factor in the successful transformation of the RTLB service. In all but one cluster, ERO’s findings highlighted the critical role of the cluster manager and lead school principal in bringing about the improved systems and processes at the core of the transformation. When working well, the layers of leadership within RTLB clusters (cluster manager, lead school board of trustees, lead school principal, practice leaders and RTLB) strengthened the quality and responsiveness of service provision.

Leadership changes in some clusters since 2012 have generally been well managed and resulted in improvements to the service.

As shown in Figure 8, the leadership of clusters has improved with 39 of the 40 clusters being well led.

**Figure 8: Leadership**



The following table shows the key shifts for leadership.

**Table 7: Shifts from 2009 to 2017 –Leadership**

From (2009)	To (2017)
Leadership was a key factor in the governance and management of RTLB clusters.	Leadership, particularly by the cluster manager, was a key factor in the successful transformation in most clusters.
Weak professional leadership and poor governance and management practices meant RTLB took the initiative and largely managed themselves.	Cluster managers and lead school principals working together with a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.
Limited leadership opportunities.	Many leadership opportunities in clusters.
Lack of opportunities for ongoing training and support to enhance leadership capability in clusters.	National forums and formal and informal networking between clusters providing opportunities for sharing and capability building.

*Next steps for improvement*

The Ministry provides induction support for new cluster managers, lead school/kura boards of trustees and principals when there are personnel changes.



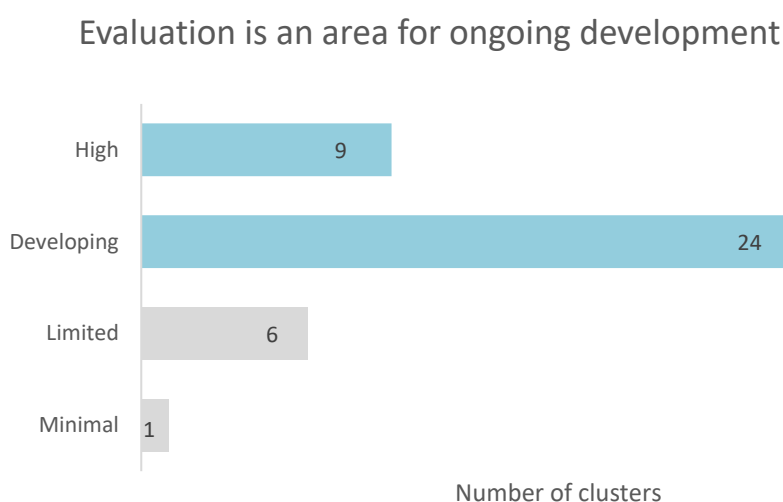
## Capability and capacity to monitor and evaluate

*To what extent has the transformation of the RTLB service contributed to increased capability and capacity, within clusters, to monitor and evaluate RTLB practice and service in order to identify what is working well and what needs to improve?*

The capacity and

capability to monitor and evaluate RTLB practice and service provision has improved since the transformation of the service. Self review was the weakest area of cluster performance in ERO's 2009 evaluation. Since then the Ministry has provided further guidance in *Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters*, including a process of peer cluster review in which just over a quarter of clusters have engaged.

**Figure 10: Capacity and capability to monitor and evaluate**



Common features of the nine clusters rated 'high' included:

- robust and aligned strategic and annual planning based on robust needs analysis
- regular reporting to key stakeholders
- ongoing monitoring and review of progress against cluster goals and priorities, and of RTLB practice in case work
- an emerging evaluative approach to internal evaluation.

Examples of **developing evaluation** practice included:

### Example 1

This cluster undertook an internal evaluation of data from the feedback in their case closure survey. They graphed the responses and although the responses were mostly positive they looked more closely at the not so positive comments and practice leaders responded to these. A framework of questions was used to reflect on their actions going forward:

- what have we learnt?
- what decisions did we make and why?
- what impact will these changes have on people, processes, resources or the environment?
- how will these changes benefit children and their learning?
- who is responsible for implementing the changes?
- what are the timeframes for implementation?
- how can we monitor the effects of these changes?

For this cluster, these reflective questions would be useful in a subsequent follow-up evaluation to frame both the evaluative inquiry and associated thinking. Such questions would deepen the focus on learners and RTLB practice. For example, asking at the beginning of the evaluation “*to what extent have the changes we made benefitted children and their learning? Which children benefitted and why, and which have not and why? What has been the impact of RTLB practice in building teacher capability to respond to the learning and behaviour needs of their learners?*”

### Example 2

This cluster engaged in a peer-review process with another cluster that focused on case work review meetings. The leadership team wanted to know whether a new system introduced in 2014 was achieving what they intended - “to support RTLB to fully understand how to link intervention with data gathering and analysis, as well as to discuss with practice leaders legitimate concerns about case work.” Data was gathered from an online questionnaire, along with observations and face-to-face interviews with individual practice leaders and RTLB. The findings of the peer review concluded that the case work review meetings were an effective and useful vehicle to achieve the intended purpose. The review found there were shared understandings about the purpose of the meetings. Some suggestions for improvement were noted by the peer review team.

This peer review could have been more evaluative had the questions used been more evaluative in their nature. For example:

Instead of asking:

“Do cluster XX RTLB understand the purpose of both meetings?”

Ask instead

“How well do cluster XX RTLB understand the purpose of both meetings?”

Instead of asking:

“Is there consistency across the teams?”

Ask instead:

“To what extent is there consistency across the teams?”

Some of the 33 clusters rated ‘high’ or ‘developing’ were beginning to use ERO’s [Effective Internal Evaluation for Improvement](#) to build their capability to evaluate provision and practice. A few were using ERO’s 2009 RTLB synthesis rubric as a framework for their review. ERO also found increasing use of data from the database to monitor case work and review aspects of practice. Planning and reporting requirements were being met, with some variability in robustness of the needs-analysis process. A reflective culture of inquiry was fostered, particularly for case work and appraisal processes. Next steps for most of these clusters included taking a more evaluative approach to their reviews, digging deeper into patterns and trends, identifying outcomes and what works for learners. A few also needed to strengthen their analysis of data, and planning and reporting processes.

Six of the clusters were found to have ‘limited’ capability and capacity to monitor and evaluate service provision and RTLB practice. These clusters had a variety of issues with planning, reporting and internal evaluation. The one cluster found to have ‘minimal’ capability and capacity had other issues that affected its capacity to monitor and evaluate its performance.

Priority needs to be given to ongoing evaluative capacity and capability building so that cluster practice can move beyond monitoring and review. Clusters need to adopt a more evaluative approach to current self-review processes. This includes analysing and evaluating patterns and trends in data, and reporting the findings. Strengthening the robustness of needs analysis, and the extent to which this information is used to identify cluster needs and priorities, would enable clusters to target resources where best needed.

#### *Next steps for improvement*

RTLB clusters build their capability and capacity to undertake robust internal evaluation.



## Involvement with Kāhui Ako

*How are RTLB clusters involved with Kāhui Ako and how is the relationship developing? What's working well and what are the challenges?*

In many RTLB clusters,

relationships with Kāhui Ako were at an early stage of development. Kāhui Ako were also at different stages of forming, with some having had their leaders appointed and their achievement challenges endorsed, and others not yet at that stage.

A key feature of the RTLB clusters where relationships with Kāhui Ako were developing was the pro-active approach of cluster managers. Cluster managers were:

- in contact with Kāhui Ako leaders via email, phone calls and visits
- emailing schools in a Kāhui Ako outlining how they could help and support the work of the community
- meeting with Kāhui Ako lead principals on a one to one basis
- discussing options for engaging with Kāhui Ako with their CAG
- helping Kāhui Ako with the development of achievement challenges
- working with a neighbouring RTLB cluster where there was crossover in Kāhui Ako boundaries.

The following are a few examples of how RTLB clusters are beginning to work with Kāhui Ako:

- ❖ Allocating a liaison RTLB to each of the four Kāhui Ako in the cluster.
- ❖ Giving short-term funding (1.0 FTE) to a Kāhui Ako because the cluster was yet to fill an RTLB vacancy.
- ❖ Establishing a protocol for RTLB working in the Kāhui Ako.
- ❖ Extracting data from the cluster database for use by the Kāhui Ako.
- ❖ Aligning the RTLB cluster's focus on boys' learning with one of the achievement challenges in the Kāhui Ako.
- ❖ Allocating \$1,000 of RTLB Cluster LSF to each school in the Kāhui Ako.
- ❖ Trialling a triage approach to allocating referrals for support in a Kāhui Ako.



RTLB clusters were facing many and varied challenges as the relationships and ways of working with Kāhui Ako were developing. In some clusters, concerns were raised about the expectations of RTLB to work with Kāhui Ako without any national engagement protocols. ERO found a degree of uncertainty amongst RTLB cluster personnel about how to proceed in a very dynamic and changing environment as Kāhui Ako were becoming established in increasing numbers. ERO also found that if there was some resistance to using the RTLB service by one or two schools in a Kāhui Ako, this negatively impacted on the RTLB cluster working with the Kāhui Ako as a whole. In one case the resistance was being driven by a view that RTLB clusters should be disbanded and the funding given directly to the Kāhui Ako. Concern was also expressed that RTLB may be captured and working only in one Kāhui Ako, as was the case in some RTLB clusters before the transformation of the service.

Since ERO undertook the data gathering for this evaluation, the Ministry has revised its Funding Agreement with RTLB clusters. This new agreement, which is for the period 1 September 2017 to 31 December 2019, sets out expectations that RTLB clusters will work with Kāhui Ako. The Ministry is also piloting a new service delivery approach of Learning Support through Kāhui Ako that will provide the opportunity to strengthen relationships with RTLB clusters.

#### *Next steps for improvement*

The Ministry monitors how RTLB clusters and Kāhui Ako are working together and provides timely support and guidance to clusters, to make sure the learning and wellbeing of students is central to decision making and collaborative efforts.



## Contribution to wider provision of learning support

*What contribution is the RTLB service making to the wider provision of learning support?*

ERO found that the RTLB service is making an important and valued contribution to the wider provision of learning support in the schooling sector, including, as mentioned above, the developing work with Kāhui Ako. Since 2009, the accountabilities and responsibilities of the RTLB service have become more diverse, resulting in a much wider scope, while maintaining the traditional casework of requests for support for individuals, groups and at a school level. RTLB were involved in, and contributed to, a wider provision of support through various projects, programmes and initiatives and interventions. This support includes each school and kura having a liaison RTLB with a focus on establishing and maintaining professional relationships, building SENCO capability to provide support to teachers before requests for support are made, and to prioritise requests when they are made. The impact of much of this liaison work was not captured in the database or evidenced in any way other than through anecdotal comments.

RTLB were also contributing through involvement in, and leadership of, a variety of projects and initiatives (as per the Funding and Service Agreement). These included:

- [transition support](#) for students, particularly from an early learning service to school where [Early Intervention](#) was involved
- co-working cases with Ministry regional Learning Support staff
- facilitating [Incredible Years Teacher](#) programmes
- supporting schools and kura implementing [Positive Behaviour for Learning Schoolwide](#)
- involvement as lead professionals and as members of [Children’s Teams](#)
- undertaking [Gateway](#) and [Bilingual Assessments](#)
- supporting secondary schools with [Special Assessment Conditions](#) applications
- involvement in Intensive Wraparound Service support
- involvement in [High Learning Needs](#) assessments
- supporting people following traumatic incidents.

Some of this work was well monitored and reported on in the database and some of it was not captured in any way. Sometimes this was because of the joint nature of the work, with no clear expectations about which agency was responsible for monitoring and evaluating the impact on learner outcomes.

Considerable change in personnel in Ministry regional Learning Support staff has negatively impacted on the extent to which many RTLB and Ministry Learning Support staff have been able to work in collaborative and seamless ways.

ERO found instances where RTLB were ‘gap filling’ because of a delay in response from other agencies, often due to capacity issues in these agencies. ERO was told about the lack of clarity for schools about which service was providing which support. Principals and SENCO also expressed concern about the RTLB service being stretched, particularly with increasing demands for support beyond the RTLB role. This included the need for support for students in relation to trauma, mental

health issues and extreme behaviour. ERO also identified issues with students ‘falling through the cracks’ when transitioning between services or between RTLB clusters.

Despite these barriers, ERO found examples of productive collaboration in RTLB clusters. In some clusters the Ministry regional Learning Support Manager was involved in regular referral and intake meetings. This involvement helped to identify where co-working on a case was necessary or when another agency or service needed to be involved. As noted earlier, waiting lists or capacity issues in other agencies meant requests for support were not always responded to in a timely manner.

Other examples of collaboration included:

- RTLB and Ministry regional Learning Support staff engaging in shared professional learning opportunities
- neighbouring RTLB clusters working together
- the RTLB cluster manager, RTLB and Ministry regional Learning Support all working on the same site
- regular meetings between RTLB cluster personnel and Regional Ministry Learning Support staff
- developing protocols for joint work by RTLB and Ministry regional Learning Support staff
- RTLB helping schools to engage with Māori and Pacific families (and parents more widely).

### *Transitions*

One of the expectations in the Funding and Service Agreement is for RTLB to support transitions. However ERO found variability in the extent to which RTLB clusters focused on supporting transitions. It was clearly a strength for some, with cluster personnel and principals and SENCO commenting on the value of RTLB involvement in transitions, whether from an early learning service to primary school, or from primary to secondary school. Some RTLB clusters, working with Early Intervention teams and early learning services, have enabled smooth transitions into primary school for children who were receiving learning support. Generally this work did not include supporting children in Kōhanga Reo to transition to primary school or kura. ERO also heard of transition support being needed for students moving from kura to English-medium schools, and particularly when moving to an English-medium secondary school.

Although many RTLB clusters were supporting transitions in a variety of ways and at different stages in the learner pathway, there was little robust evidence to show what difference this work was making. Evidence was mostly anecdotal; for example, ERO was told that because of this transition work, schools were better prepared for students and stronger relationships were developing between early learning services and schools.



### *Next steps for improvement*

Clusters evaluate the effectiveness of transition support and its impact on student wellbeing and learning.

The Ministry and RTLB clusters work together to establish clear expectations and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the impact of joint collaborative work on learner outcomes.

The Ministry works with RTLB clusters to make sure there is clear and consistent communication to schools and kura about the changing landscape in which RTLB are working and contributing to the wider provision of Learning Support.



## Impact of RTLB service

*What evidence is there of the impact of the RTLB service on improving learner outcomes?*

Evidence of the impact of the RTLB service on improving learner outcomes was somewhat limited. Systems to capture such evidence were not yet able to generate information in meaningful and useful ways.

ERO found that while most clusters were data rich for individual case data and casework monitoring, its use beyond the individual case was often limited. A few clusters were evaluating specific interventions or programmes using data from a variety of sources, however this was not common practice across the service. Cluster managers and lead school principals need support with gathering, analysing, reporting and using data to evaluate the impact of the RTLB service on improving outcomes for learners.

Most of the RTLB clusters are using the Outcomes Framework as set out in the [Professional Practice Toolkit](#) and reporting some data to the Ministry and to the lead school board of trustees. However a few are still coming to grips with the database and this has limited their reporting to the Ministry, the lead school board of trustees and wider community.

ERO identified several issues with the Outcomes Framework that limited clusters' ability to report meaningfully on the impact of the service on learner outcomes. Issues with the framework included its broad nature, which left it open to interpretation and subjectivity. A lack of processes for moderation in many clusters compromised the reliability of judgements made. As a result, averaging the outcomes data from individual or group case work to a cluster level resulted in meaningless data unsuitable for reporting and decision-making purposes.

Another issue with the Outcomes Framework was lack of a clear connection with achievement and wellbeing data in schools and kura, and to the curriculum frameworks and assessment tools used by schools and kura. Coupled with this is the question of how to monitor the sustainability of progress for learners who have been the focus of an RTLB intervention and how to capture and evaluate the impact of RTLB practice on improving teacher capability.

Generally, at case closure, RTLB report against specific goals and outcomes. Some clusters have identified the need to improve the robustness and relevance of the goals set for individuals or groups of students. Often case closure reports included whānau and student voices, and some clusters were seeking teacher and SENCO feedback at case closure and collating it as part of their review processes. This information is valuable but yet to be fully used to contribute to a wider evaluation of provision and practice in RTLB clusters.

ERO found that although many clusters had sound systems and processes for monitoring and review, they had not yet shifted to using a more evaluative lens that focused on what was working and for whom and why (and what was not working, for whom and why). This is an important next step for clusters to be able make evidence-based decisions about the allocation of resource and expertise to maximise effectiveness of their service.

ERO also found variable practice regarding analysis of outcomes data for Māori students. Some clusters had data at the cluster level, but the averaging of this data meant it was not useful. For example, in one cluster the averaged outcomes data showed that Māori students in kura were making greater gains (learning achievement) than non-Māori. However there was no explanation as to why this was so and what was contributing to the gain (or if the gains were good enough or great).

At the time of the ERO evaluation, RTLB clusters were using one of two different databases and in some clusters different versions of the same database. This situation impacted on the extent to which the Ministry could use the data and information it received from clusters on a quarterly and annual basis. The data management systems being used in the RTLB service were also not compatible with systems in other agencies thus limiting the extent to which data could be shared and used to make sure learners are at the heart of the system.

### *Next steps for improvement*

The Ministry works with RTLB clusters to review the Outcomes Framework, and address issues raised in this report about its purpose and usefulness.

The Ministry supports cluster managers and lead school principals to evaluate the impact of the RTLB service on improving outcomes for learners using a more evaluative lens that focuses on what is working and for whom and why.

The Ministry works with RTLB clusters to explore how to best monitor and evaluate the sustainability of progress for learners who have been the focus of an RTLB intervention.

The Ministry works with the RTLB clusters to make more use of the database for monitoring, evaluation and reporting.



## Discussion

### Looking to the future: questions and challenges

*The right expertise and support, at the right time, for the every learner.*

This evaluation highlights positive shifts resulting from the transformation of the RTLB service in 2012. It also raises questions and identifies challenges for the education system, and the place of the RTLB in the wider context of Learning Support.

#### **How well placed is the education system, through the provision of learning support, to respond to the changing needs of diverse learners?**

This evaluation, through the lens of all 40 RTLB clusters, signals a changing profile of learners needing additional learning and/or behaviour support. Many of the key stakeholders ERO met with talked about learners with needs that are more complex and challenging than ever before, as shown in the following excerpts from interviews.

*Most of the children we're having difficulty with have mental health issues. Principal  
In my school we have some real high needs but there's no one out there. XX [RTLB] helps but it's not his role. Principal*

*The nature of cases and complexity pushes RTLB to limits of expertise. RTLB  
We see changes under the current system in the complexity of cases RTLB picking up partly because other agencies are not picking them up. Principal*

Evidence from this evaluation indicates that the RTLB service is taking on more complex cases, particularly in relation to extreme behaviours and students with mental health issues. It is timely and important to explore the extent to which the current system of Learning Support can respond to this complexity, and where the RTLB service sits in such a response.

#### **To what extent is the role and function of the RTLB service (and of RTLB) fit for a proposed future system?**

RTLB are recruited from the teaching profession and undertake an additional post-graduate qualification that enables them to work as specialist itinerant teachers. They have a 'niche' set of capabilities to work with schools and kura building teacher capability, and increasing school-level capacity.

ERO's evaluation highlights the valued contribution the RTLB service is making to the wider provision of learning support. While the [role of RTLB](#) has remained largely the same since 2009 (pre-transformation), changes in expectations of the service (as set out in the Funding and Service Agreement) have widened its scope. This widened scope is stretching the service and as a result RTLB are working in areas beyond those key to their role.

ERO found positive examples of opportunities to engage in: specialised work, increased leadership, co-working cases, successful collaborations (especially regarding transitions), new relationships and ways of working in Kāhui Ako, and different approaches to managing referrals for support. We heard from stakeholders that the RTLB service is both valued and stretched.

Principals and SENCO commented positively that RTLB are in schools every day through their liaison role and their casework. They value the accessibility and availability of RTLB when other agencies and services are not so quick to respond. The following examples reflect these commonly held views.

*RTLB are part of the problem-solving team for Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) in our school.*

Principal

*There are 10 kids in my school who wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the RTLB.* Principal

*I really value the RTLB for the links they make to other organisations.* Principal

*Accessing services for children is frustrating in contrast to responsive RTLB service.* Principal

### **Looking forward to a 'one service delivery approach' – what are the implications and challenges for the RTLB service?**

ERO's findings identify some of the successes and challenges in the way in which the RTLB service interfaces with Ministry Learning Support and with other agencies.

The [Ministry's](#) plans for updating Learning Support provision focus on a single point of access for parents, whānau and schools. The intent is an inclusive system that puts "learners who need support at the heart of everything we do, so they get the right support, when they need it." It is not yet clear where the RTLB service will fit into the new approach. The capability and capacity required for a seamless, single point access to services is substantial, and some of the issues identified in this evaluation report will need to be addressed. These include the need for more responsive specialist services, timely access to these services, greater collaboration and growing specialisation in working with learners with increasingly complex mental health issues.

Principals and SENCO commented positively about the work RTLB do that sometimes extends beyond their role and expertise. These stakeholders shared their views about the system and what is working and what is not as shown in the following comments.

*It is the service that is working that I can count on.* SENCO

*I like the fact that an RTLB leaves a legacy of skill set with the teacher.* Principal

*We had a serious behaviour incident last year- called the Ministry of Education and RTLB service.*

*RTLB responded quickly, Ministry said there was a 90 day wait.* SENCO

*It takes a year to get a foetal alcohol assessment.* Principal

*If we could have a one stop shop where we're not just looking at learning but where the whole complexity of need could be looked.* Principal

*The system in place is the problem, not the people.* Principal

*RTLB are holding cases that should be with Learning Support.* Principal

It is also interesting that the RTLB service is being positioned by the [Ministry](#) as a 'behavioural service' in the broader provision of system-level Learning Support. As noted in the findings section the bulk of requests for support are for 'learning' or 'learning and behaviour'. Students with specific learning disorders, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia and those whose learning is impacted by exposure to alcohol and drugs, place pressures on the system to respond to their learning and behaviour needs. So positioning the RTLB service as a behaviour service is misleading and does not recognise the important and valued work that RTLB do to support a wide range of increasingly complex learning needs.



In repositioning the RTLB service, the Ministry needs to consider RTLB’s current work, and the value placed on it by the education sector. Where is the RTLB service best placed within a new approach to Learning Support? What actions need to be taken to ensure the coherence of service provision across the system to *“get the right expertise and support at the right time for every learner.”*



## Implications and recommendations

This evaluation provided an opportunity for ERO to investigate the impact of the transformation of the RTLB service following our 2009 report. The overall findings present a positive picture of the RTLB service five years on from transformation. They also highlight more specifically the successes and next steps for RTLB clusters and the Ministry.

The transformation has been well managed and led, resulting in a much improved service in terms of the extent to which RTLB clusters are governed and managed in general. Effective leadership and improved systems and processes have positioned the service well to continue to positively contribute to learning support for students in Years 1-10.

ERO's findings also highlight the changing system-level context for supporting students with additional learning needs and the establishment of Kāhui Ako. These changes present many opportunities for the RTLB service as well as issues and challenges going forward.

Priority needs to be given to ongoing capacity and capability building in clusters, so practice can move beyond monitoring and review. A key area for improvement is developing robust internal evaluation of service provision and RTLB practice. While ERO notes this is occurring in many clusters, internal evaluation is not sufficiently robust or evaluative to provide evidence of the impact of the service, and RTLB practice, on learner outcomes at cluster and system level.

This evaluation highlights several issues related to assessing and reporting on outcomes. The Outcomes Framework does not align well to assessment and curriculum frameworks in schools and kura. ERO also identified the need for a more systematic way to track sustainability of progress, achievement and wellbeing for learners who have received RTLB support. This would also need to include evidence of the impact of RTLB work on improving teacher capability and school-level systems, to better respond to learners with learning and behavior needs over time.

Data management systems were also not yet compatible with systems in other agencies, thus limiting the extent to which data could be shared and used to make sure learners are at the heart of the system. This is an area for the Ministry to pursue at a time when such systems are being developed and/or aligned.

While kura and wharekura were making increased use of the RTLB service, ERO identified barriers to their equitable access largely because the referral system and associated database has been set up for English-medium schools. Steps need to be taken to address this to ensure equitable access, regardless of where the referral is coming from.

In a few clusters, ERO found professional relationship issues were negatively impacting on performance. The extent of these issues varied, with new leadership or mediation interventions in place to bring about improvement. The Ministry needs to monitor these clusters to make sure improvements are sustained.

A challenge for many clusters was to broaden communication to include iwi and early learning services. In a few clusters, improved communication could help address some misunderstandings about the role of the RTLB and what the service provides. ERO's findings highlight a need for the Ministry to monitor and evaluate how well RTLB clusters and Kāhui Ako are working together.

This report highlights the successes of the transformation of the RTLB service over the past five years and identifies some real challenges for RTLB clusters and the Ministry going forward. Changes at a system level have the potential to bring about a more coherent, learner-focused approach to service delivery for our most at risk learners. The RTLB service has shown that it can be adaptive, flexible and responsive to the needs of schools and their students. The next steps for improvement and subsequent recommendations in this report need to be priorities for action by RTLB clusters and the Ministry, so the service continues to be a valued and integral part of the system supporting communities, schools and learners.

## Recommendations

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education and RTLB clusters work together to:

- review the existing Outcomes Framework to strengthen evidence gathering and reporting of RTLB interventions on students' progress and achievement, in both the short and longer term
- develop clear expectations and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating joint work with other agencies
- develop a shared vision of Learning Support provision and the service expectations for RTLB in light of the skills and expertise of this specialist group of teachers.

ERO recommends that RTLB clusters:

- strengthen their capability and capacity for robust internal evaluation of their impact on learning and wellbeing outcomes for learners.

ERO recommends that the Ministry of Education:

- works with other relevant agencies to ensure students with extreme behaviour needs and mental health issues receive 'the right support, at the right time, from the right service'
- reviews the expectations of the RTLB service (as set out in the Funding Agreement) to ensure the scope of what RTLB do reflects their specialist role in the system
- recognises and maintains the role the RTLB service has in supporting learners with increasingly diverse and complex learning needs
- supports induction for new cluster managers, lead school principals and lead school boards of trustees
- closely monitors and supports collaboration between RTLB clusters and Kāhui Ako to make sure the learning and wellbeing of students is central to decision making.

ERO also recommends the following areas of research and evaluation be considered:

- the impact of the RTLB service on the progress and achievement of students with learning and/or behaviour needs who receive an RTLB intervention
- the impact of the RTLB service on building teacher capability to support learners for sustained results
- the impact of the RTLB service and the associated investment of approximately \$90 million per annum
- the ways that RTLB clusters collaborate with schools to evaluate both the short- and long-term impact of their work.

## Appendix 1: The RTLB service

The RTLB service aims to improve learning and teaching for students with moderate learning or behaviour difficulties in schools. The role of an RTLB is to help facilitate the presence, participation and learning of those students who experience these difficulties. RTLB are a group of trained itinerant specialist teachers, working across clusters of schools, who provide support to ensure good educational outcomes for Years 1-10 students. There are nearly 1000 RTLB in New Zealand today, working in 40 clusters throughout the country. RTLB services are managed by full-time cluster managers, situated in 40 lead schools/kura.

### *Transforming the RTLB service*

In September 2010, the Minister of Education instructed the Ministry to review and transform the RTLB service. The purpose of the transformation was simple - to ensure a better deal for students with learning and behaviour difficulties.

There were two aspirational beliefs at the core of the transformation: (i) that, with the right leadership, the national RTLB service can be effective in helping students with learning and behaviour needs participate in schooling to their fullest potential; and (ii) that, with the right structures, people and funds can be managed to the highest standards possible.

Through the transformation process the Ministry was keen to achieve:

- improved governance based on clearer goals, plans and priorities
- better alignment with other special education services
- stronger professional leadership and improved professional learning opportunities for RTLBs
- more consistent professional practice from all clusters across the country
- an increased focus on success for Māori and Pacific students
- better training and support systems for all RTLB.

As a result of recommendations made to the Ministry by two working groups set up to plan the transformation (a principals' working group and a practitioners' working group), at the end of 2011 the Ministry of Education restructured the RTLB service and reduced the number of clusters from 200 to 40.

From the start of 2012, each cluster has been attached to a lead school, and the board of trustees of that school has had responsibility for governance and oversight. Cluster managers have had overall responsibility for the day-to-day management and coordination of the service. Practice leaders are trained RTLB with additional responsibilities, particularly for personnel management.

Massey University and University of Canterbury were jointly contracted to provide specialist RTLB training, which became a stipulated requirement for all RTLBs to complete (if they did not hold an equivalent qualification).

The RTLB service now works within national guidelines – [Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters](#) and the [Professional Practice Toolkit](#), developed by the service itself over 2014 and 2015.

These guidelines stipulate principles, the scope of activities, and outline a practice sequence for RTLB work on either individual or group cases.

**Principles.** The eight key principles for guiding all RTLB work are:

- *Inclusive teaching*, so that RTLB help teachers to recognise and value the diversity and contribution of all children and young people, and help create effective classroom environments that enhance learning, self identity, participation and contribution from all learners.
- *Cultural responsiveness*, so that RTLB work to strengthen self-confidence and cultural identity of all students and foster connection to parents, families/whānau and kura whānau/school communities.
- *An ecological approach*, so that every student's needs and the programmes, interventions and supports provided must be understood and shaped within the context of the student's current learning environment.
- *A collaborative and seamless model of service*, so that students experience seamless inter-professional practice, where the professionals within and without the school learn with, from and about each other, as they go about work planning interventions and supports.
- *A strengths based approach*, so that goals acknowledge and enhance strengths, focus on the future and not the past, and rekindle hope or enhance motivation as they facilitate change.
- *Reflection*, where RTLB keep records of each step in the practice sequence to allow for continuous reflection on practice that ensures fidelity to programme goals and principles, and better outcomes for students in the future, through continuous improvement.
- *Evidence based practice*, applying relevant research evidence, as well as practitioner expertise and the voice of the teacher/whānau/student, to each case in an informed way.
- *Professional ethics*, so that all RTLB work is done within the code of ethics for registered teachers and is governed by the principles within the code for the promotion of autonomy, justice, responsible care and truth.



## Appendix 2: RTLB Clusters in this evaluation

Cluster No.	Lead School/Kura Name	Cluster Area	No. of Schools	RTLB FTTE 2017
1	Taipa Area School	Northland	70	26
2	Whangarei Girls High	Whangarei	76	25
3	Red Beach School	Hibiscus Coast/Rodney	36	14
4	Campbells Bay School	North Shore	70	30
5	Don Buck School	Massey/Henderson/Te Atatu	50	32
6	Arahoe School	Kelston/Avondale	29	20
7	Newmarket School	Mt Eden/Mt Roskill/Mt Albert	65	36
8	Royal Oak School	Tamaki/Remuera/Maungakiekie	50	30
9	Southern Cross Campus	Otahuhu/Mangere	29	26
10	Papatoetoe Intermediate	Papatoetoe/Otara	29	29
11	Pakuranga Intermediate	Howick/Pakuranga/Flat Bush	43	28
12	Manurewa East School	Manurewa/Weymouth	33	30
13	Pukekohe Intermediate	Papakura/Pukekohe/Waiuku	67	28
14	Morrinsville Intermediate	Cambridge/Morrinsville/Tokoroa	75	22
15	Miller Avenue School	Coromandel/Thames/Waihi	50	14
16	Nawton School	Hamilton/Hillcrest/Fairfield	76	39
17	Taumarunui High School	Te Kuiti/Taumarunui/Te Awamutu	64	15
18	Te Akau ki Papamoa Primary School	Tauranga/Mt Maunganui/Te Puke	63	33
19	Edgecumbe School	Whakatane/Opotiki/Rangitaiki	45	17
20	Rotorua Lakes High School	Rotorua/Taupo/Mangakino	71	30
21	Gisborne Girls' High School	Gisborne/East Coast	64	22
22	Taradale Intermediate	Napier/Taradale/Colenso	40	15
23	Frimley School	Hastings/Central Hawkes Bay	66	23
24	New Plymouth Boys High School	Taranaki/Opunake/New Plymouth	93	25
25	Tawhero School	Whanganui/Feilding/Ruapehu	89	21
26	Freyberg High School	Palmerston North/Horowhenua/ Kapiti	113	38
27	Masterton Primary School	Upper Hutt/Wairarapa	54	17
28	Owhiro Bay School	Wellington/Porirua	108	37
29	Avalon Intermediate	Lower Hutt/Wainuiomata	51	21
30	Motueka South School	Nelson/Golden Bay/Puna Awarua	52	19
31	Blenheim School	Picton/Blenheim/Kaikoura/Havelock	36	9
32	Cobden School	West Coast	35	13
33	Kaiapoi North School	North Canterbury/Rangiora/Papanui	38	10
34	Mairehau School	Aranui/Linwood/Port Hills/Shirley/ Chatham Islands	65	29
35	Casebrook Intermediate	Fendalton/Ricardo/Burnside/Hillmorton	60	27
36	Leeston School	Mid Canterbury/Peninsula/Malvern	55	14
37	Oceanview Heights School	South Canterbury/Timaru	46	11
38	Cromwell College	Central Otago/Lakes	28	9
39	Tahuna Normal Intermediate	Dunedin/Taieri/Otago	118	25
40	Aurora College	Southland/Invercargill/Gore	83	20

The following tables show the impact of the transformation, in both reducing the number of clusters and increasing the number of RTLB in each cluster. The transformation substantially increased the number of RTLB (and pool of expertise) in each cluster, thus reducing the chance of capture and having a small number of RTLB to draw on (as ERO found in 2009).

Table 1: RTLB clusters in 2009

No. of RTLB per cluster	Total number of RTLB clusters	Percentage of RTLB clusters
1 RTLB	20	10.1
2 RTLB	41	20.6
3 RTLB	50	25.1
4 RTLB	32	16.1
5 RTLB	13	6.5
6 RTLB	18	9
7 RTLB	9	4.5
8 RTLB	3	1.5
9 RTLB	5	2.5
10 -11 RTLB	5	2.5
12 -13 RTLB	2	1.0
14+ RTLB	1	0.5
Total	199	100

Table 2: RTLB Clusters in 2017

No. of RTLB per cluster	Total number of RTLB clusters	Percentage of RTLB clusters
10 or less RTLB	3	7.5
11-15 RTLB	7	17.5
16-20 RTLB	5	12.5
21-25 RTLB	8	20
26-30 RTLB	11	27.5
31-39 RTLB	6	15
Total	40	100



## Appendix 3: Meetings held with key stakeholders

Meetings held in each cluster	Numbers attending meetings across 40 clusters	Focus of meeting
Principals	263 This number includes phone calls/Skype to 3 principals in remote schools	This meeting focused on how the RTLB service was working for cluster school principals - success and challenges. Is the RTLB service operating flexibly and innovatively to meet needs?
Tumuaki – kura/wharekura	19	This meeting focused on how the RTLB service was working for tumuaki in Māori immersion kura/wharekura - success and challenges. Is the RTLB service operating flexibly and innovatively to meet needs?
SENCO or equivalent	247	This meeting focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the nature of their involvement with RTLB</li> <li>• how they have been helped to improve student outcomes</li> <li>• referral processes</li> <li>• what's working well</li> <li>• challenges.</li> </ul>
Initial meetings -Cluster managers -Lead school principals -Lead school board of trustees chairperson or representative -In some clusters practice leaders also attended the initial meeting	134	To get an overview of the cluster including internal evaluation (self review) and identified success and challenges. The initial meetings covered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cluster priorities</li> <li>• processes for identifying these</li> <li>• planning to reflect cluster priorities</li> <li>• recruitment and induction</li> <li>• appraisal</li> <li>• supervision</li> <li>• professional learning and development for RTLB</li> <li>• monitoring impacts on student outcomes - data gathered, evidence, internal evaluation</li> <li>• what's working well</li> <li>• challenges</li> <li>• relationships with Ministry of Education and other agencies</li> <li>• working with Kāhui Ako.</li> </ul>
Practice leaders (In one cluster practice leaders were referred to as regional coordinators)	116	This meeting focused on their leadership role in working with RTLBs - success and challenges.
RTLB (In some clusters meetings were also held with RTLB who had additional responsibilities)	306	This meeting focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• what guides their work</li> <li>• how their time is spent</li> <li>• referral processes</li> <li>• professional relationships</li> <li>• appraisal</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional learning and development</li> <li>• professional supervision</li> <li>• their role in monitoring and evaluation in the cluster</li> <li>• reporting, including on practice and outcomes</li> <li>• what’s working well</li> <li>• challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>Exit meetings</b> -Cluster managers -Lead school principals -Lead school board of trustees chairperson or representative -In some clusters practice leaders also attended the initial meeting	133	To provide cluster leaders with verbal feedback on the tentative/emerging findings of their review.
<b>Other:</b> -Ministry of Education Learning Support staff -Other agencies	28 6	These meetings were set up at the discretion of the RTLB cluster and were not held in every cluster. The focus of these additional meetings varied in each cluster.



## Appendix 4: Evaluation framework and investigative prompts

### Overarching question for the national evaluation report:

What evidence is there of the impact of the RTLB service on improving learner outcomes?

### Additional questions to be answered in the national evaluation report:

1. To what extent has the quality and consistency of RTLB cluster governance and management improved to address the issues identified in ERO's 2009 evaluation?
2. To what extent has the transformation of the RTLB service contributed to increased capability and capacity within clusters to monitor and evaluate RTLB practice and service provision in order to identify what is working well and what needs to improve?
3. What contribution is the RTLB service making to the wider provision of learning support?
4. How are RTLB clusters involved in Communities of Learning and how is the relationship developing? What's working well and what are the challenges?

In order to answer these questions (above) we need to investigate and evaluate the following in each RTLB Cluster:

### **What evidence is there of the impact of the RTLB service on improving learner outcomes?**

- What difference are you making as a cluster for the learners you serve? How do you know?
- What evidence do you have of improved outcomes?
- Where are you at in terms of working with outcomes framework in RTLB Professional Practice Toolkit? Usefulness of this framework? Issues?
- What do you know about outcomes for Māori learners – in Māori immersion kura? In rumaki/immersion classes? Mainstream?
- What do you know about outcomes for Pacific learners?
- Where are you having the most success in terms of outcomes and why? Where are your challenges? How are responding to these?

### **How well is this cluster governed and managed to improve outcomes for learners?**

(An overall judgement as per synthesis rubric - Very good, Sound, Limited, Minimal)

### **Use the RTLB synthesis rubric 2017 to make a judgement in relation to:**

- operating according to requirements (*Funding and Service Agreement*  
*Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters* and the *RTLB Professional Practice Toolkit*)
- funding- including LSF, Y11-13
- internal evaluation (self review), planning and reporting
- access to service
- personnel management and professional support



- professional relationships
- collaboration with Ministry of Education –“seamless provision of service”
- communication
- leadership
- outcomes for learners

### Investigative prompts

- What do you know about the extent to which you operate according to requirements (*Funding and Service Agreement, Governing and Managing RTLB Clusters* and the *RTLB Professional Practice Toolkit*)? How do you know this? (what evidence do you have?)
- How have you kept up-to-date with changes in requirements, for example to the *RTLB Professional Practice Toolkit*?
- How do you ensure funding is allocated, tracked and accounted for to achieve cluster priorities?
- How does your cluster’s needs analysis process take account of the voices and perspectives of key stakeholders including iwi and whānau? How do these voices and perspectives contribute to the review and development of your strategic and annual planning?
- How useful is your cluster needs analysis process? Strengths? Barriers?
- What are the strengths of your strategic and annual planning? What challenges do you face when planning?
- How does cluster strategic and annual planning include specific objectives for improving outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners?
- Your cluster undertakes quite a lot of reporting - how useful is this reporting? What feedback do you get? About what? Who from? How useful is it?
- How would you describe the capacity and capability you have in your cluster to undertake effective internal evaluation? Have cluster personnel been involved in any professional development to build capability?
- What are the ‘conditions’ in your cluster that support your internal evaluation? For example a high level of relational trust, tools and methods, embedding evaluative thinking.
- How do you ensure equitable access to the RTLB service? How do you prioritise? Make decisions?
- How do you ensure you have robust systems for personnel management including the recruitment, induction, appraisal, supervision and development of cluster personnel (particularly Practice leaders and RTLB)?
- How do you identify areas for professional support for Practice Leaders and RTLB? What works and what are your challenges?
- What does collaboration with Ministry of Education (national and regional) and ‘seamless provision’ look like in your cluster? What successes have you had and what challenges or issues are you facing?
- How do you manage the wide range of service expectations (in the *Funding and Service Agreement*)? How do you manage workloads around these expectations?
- What does communication look like in your cluster? How does it work (or not) and how do you know?
- What are the leadership opportunities in your cluster? Who leads? How are you building leadership capability? What are your leadership successes and challenges?

## **What is the capacity and capability in this RTLB cluster to monitor and evaluate service provision and RTLB practice to identify what is working well and what needs to improve?**

(An overall judgement – High, Developing, Limited, Minimal)

### **Investigative prompts**

- Do you have Māori immersion kura in your cluster? What do you know about the access these kura have to the RTLB service? How well aligned are referral and intervention processes to the kura immersion context?
- In what ways has your cluster increased the knowledge and capability of RTLB to effectively respond to Māori students (mainstream, rumaki and immersion) referred to the service?
- How do you monitor and evaluate service provision and practice?
- What does improvement look like in your cluster?
- How has capacity and capability to monitor and evaluate been developed or strengthened? For whom?
- Who leads? Who is involved? How and in what aspects/processes?
- What opportunities are there for collaborative inquiry and evaluation?
- What do you know about what is working well and what needs to improve?
- What are your priorities? How have you determined these? How are they changing over time?
- How do these priorities align to 'annual service priorities' (Māori student achievement, Pasifika student achievement, inclusion)?
- How do you monitor and evaluate practice and outcomes against these 'annual service priorities'?

## **What contribution is the RTLB service making to the wider provision of learning support?**

### **Investigative prompts**

- How has the role of the RTLB service changed since 2012?
- Where does the RTLB service sit in relation to the wider provision of learning support?
- What does this RTLB service contribute to this wider provision?
- What's working well? What are the challenges?

## **How are RTLB clusters involved in Communities of Learning| Kāhui Ako and how is the relationship developing? What's working well and what are the challenges?**

### **Investigative prompts**

- What is the involvement of your RTLB cluster in Communities of Learning| Kāhui Ako?
- If some involvement, what does this look like?
- Who is involved? For how long?
- How is it working?
- Successes? Challenges

## Appendix 5: RTLB Synthesis Rubric

Continuum	1 Minimal	2 Limited	3 Sound	4 Very good
<b>Operates according to requirements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster not operating in accordance with RTLB policy.</li> <li>Cluster processes for the allocation of funding not clear or easy to track.</li> <li>Operational document of policies and procedures is not up to date or complete.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster operates according to some RTLB policy (not in all areas of governance and management).</li> <li>Processes for allocation of funding exist but not easy to track/follow.</li> <li>Operational document is being developed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster operates in accordance with most RTLB policy.</li> <li>Cluster has transparent processes for the allocation of funding on a needs basis in accordance with cluster policy.</li> <li>Operational document is complete and current.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has an operational document of policies and procedures that is clear and is well used to guide operations.</li> <li>Cluster operates in accordance with all RTLB policy.</li> <li>Funding allocation processes are well known to all involved and are used for the provision of the RTLB service in accordance with Ministry of Education and cluster policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Internal evaluation (self review), planning and reporting.</b>  <b>Focus on improvement and outcomes for learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster planning and reporting is limited or non-existent.</li> <li>Very limited or no internal evaluation.</li> <li>No reporting to the Ministry of Education.</li> <li>No monitoring, evaluation or reporting of outcomes.</li> <li>The cluster lacks the capability and capacity to monitor and evaluate its performance (service provision, RTLB practice and learner outcomes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster planning and reporting undertaken in a superficial way.</li> <li>There is evidence of some annual planning.</li> <li>Some evidence of reporting to Ministry of Education.</li> <li>Limited monitoring, evaluation and reporting of outcomes.</li> <li>The cluster has limited capacity and capability to monitor and evaluate its performance (service provision, RTLB practice and learner outcomes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has a planning and reporting cycle incorporating evidence-based internal evaluation.</li> <li>Most of the objectives of the Annual Plan are met.</li> <li>Ministry of Education reporting requirements are met.</li> <li>Some evidence of monitoring, evaluation and reporting of outcomes may be early stage or developing.</li> <li>The cluster is developing its capacity and capability to monitor and evaluate its performance (service provision, RTLB practice and learner outcomes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has a robust planning and reporting cycle that is informed by evidence-based internal evaluation.</li> <li>The objectives of the Annual Plan are met.</li> <li>The planning and reporting process leads to innovative and improved practice.</li> <li>Ministry of Education reporting requirements are fully met.</li> <li>Evidence of robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting of outcomes.</li> <li>The cluster has a high level of capacity and capability to monitor and evaluate its performance (service provision, RTLB practice and learner outcomes).</li> </ul>
<b>Access to service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not clear whether referrals are managed to ensure equitable access for all students with learning or behavioural difficulties.</li> <li>Evidence of inequitable access.</li> <li>The processes for supporting students with HLNs is not evident/the cluster is not supporting students according to the MOE guidelines.</li> <li>The cluster is not involved in Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral processes that are in place are the pre-transformation processes with some adjustments.</li> <li>These need to be refined and a cluster-wide referral process established.</li> <li>Some evidence of issues regarding access to service.</li> <li>The cluster supports students with HLNs but does not have a consistent approach.</li> <li>Limited involvement in Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has referral processes that are known and followed to ensure equitable access for all students with learning or behavioural difficulties.</li> <li>The service provision for HLN students is evident.</li> <li>The cluster is involved in Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral processes are well known, understood, followed and easy to access.</li> <li>Principals affirm and endorse the high standard of practice applied to the referral process.</li> <li>Cluster schools/BoTs know how and when to access the service.</li> <li>Cluster schools/BoTs have equitable access to the full range of RTLB services and funding.</li> <li>Cluster has established a clear and consistent process for supporting HLN students in line with the HLN Guidelines.</li> <li>The cluster is fully involved in Special Assessment Conditions (SAC)</li> </ul>
<b>Personnel management and professional support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems for appointment and performance management, including professional supervision and appraisal are out of date and do not guide/reflect practice.</li> <li>Minimal opportunities for RTLB to undertake professional learning.</li> <li>Minimal collegial support and mentoring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems for RTLB appointment and performance management, including professional supervision and appraisal are not fully developed.</li> <li>Some support and encouragement for professional learning.</li> <li>Collegial support and mentoring evident but not cluster wide or formalised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has sound systems for RTLB appointment and performance management, including professional supervision and appraisal.</li> <li>Cluster encourages continuing professional learning to improve practice and ensure a diverse RTLB skill base to meet students' individual needs.</li> <li>Cluster values collegial support and provides mentoring when needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has high quality systems for appointment and performance management, including professional supervision and appraisal.</li> <li>Cluster actively seeks continuing professional learning based on current research to improve practice and ensure a diverse skill base to meet students' individual needs.</li> <li>Cluster values collegial support and provides mentoring. RTLBs actively seek feedback about their practice.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor relationships at all levels.</li> <li>RTLB do not work collaboratively with MOE or other agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships exist but not always professional, trusting and respectful.</li> <li>Ad hoc approach to collaboration with MOE and other agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional, trusting and respectful relationships generally evident.</li> <li>Work underway to develop a collaborative working relationship with MOE and other agencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster actively promotes professional, trusting and respectful relationships at all levels.</li> <li>Cluster schools value the relationship they have with the RTLB service.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration with MOE "Seamless Provision of Service"</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOE and RTLB have no established relationship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOE and RTLB are working towards establishing a collaborative relationship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOE and RTLB consult to improve student outcomes.</li> <li>Transition processes between services are in place.</li> <li>Some collaboration on joint projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has RTLB that work proactively with MOE and other agencies to provide a seamless, flexible service for students with learning or behavioural difficulties.</li> <li>Seamless inter-professional practice is evident through a seamless request for support pathway and sound transition processes.</li> <li>MOE and RTLB work collaboratively to improve student outcomes.</li> <li>MOE and RTLB work effectively on joint projects.</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor communication in the cluster.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication issues evident at some levels of the cluster.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally good communication but could improve clarity and openness.</li> <li>Plans are in place to improve communication.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster communicates regularly, with clarity and openness.</li> <li>Communications are timely.</li> <li>There is genuine collaboration and regular communication with Ministry Learning Support Managers, RTLB staff, cluster schools, ECE services, iwi, and community agencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of leadership in the cluster.</li> <li>No Cluster Manager appointed.</li> <li>No Practice Leaders appointed.</li> <li>Minimal involvement of Lead School in governance and management.</li> <li>Limited communication with cluster schools/BoTs (principals and BoTs)</li> <li>Limited understanding of RTLB role or the cluster planning (Strategic and Annual).</li> <li>Little or no progress made in the transformation of the service.</li> <li>The Lead School is BoT is not informed about the work of the cluster and the impact of this work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership in some aspects of the cluster.</li> <li>A Cluster Manager has been appointed.</li> <li>Some Practice Leaders have been appointed.</li> <li>Lead School demonstrates some aspects of governance and management in line with MOE policy and the Funding and Service Agreement.</li> <li>Some evidence of transformation of service.</li> <li>There is some level of communication with schools/BoTs (principals and BoTs) but this could be developed further.</li> <li>Some shared understanding of RTLB role and cluster planning (Strategic and Annual).</li> <li>The Lead School BoT has some knowledge about the work of the cluster and the impact of this work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has good professional leadership.</li> <li>The Cluster Manager demonstrates sound management of the cluster in collaboration with the Lead School Principal.</li> <li>Practice Leaders demonstrate good leadership in improving RTLB practice in collaboration with the Cluster Manager.</li> <li>The Lead School demonstrates sound governance and management in line with the MOE policy and the Funding and Service Agreement.</li> <li>Sound evidence of transformation of service.</li> <li>Active and regular communication with communication with schools/BoTs (principals and BoTs) who have a shared understanding of the RTLB role and the cluster planning (Strategic and Annual).</li> <li>The Lead School BoT has some knowledge about the work of the cluster and the impact of this work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster has strong professional leadership.</li> <li>The Cluster Manager demonstrates effective management of the cluster.</li> <li>Practice Leaders are effective leaders, impacting positively on RTLB practice in collaboration with the Cluster Manager.</li> <li>The Lead School BoT demonstrates effective governance and management and follows the MOE policy and the Funding and Service Agreement.</li> <li>The transformation of RTLB service is progressing well.</li> <li>Effective and regular communication with cluster principals and cluster BOT who are well informed of the RTLB role and cluster planning (Strategic and Annual).</li> <li>The Lead School BoT is knowledgeable and well informed about the work of the cluster and the impact of this work.</li> </ul>
<b>Improved Student Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimal or no evidence of outcomes of RTLB interventions/practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some evidence of outcomes of RTLB interventions/practice but this is limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster is able to demonstrate the outcomes of RTLB interventions/practice for most students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster focuses on improving outcomes for all students, with a particular focus on Māori and Pacific students and those at risk of underachievement.</li> <li>The cluster is able to provide evidence that RTLB interventions/practice and support achieve improved outcomes for all learners accessing the service.</li> </ul>



**Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa**  
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