

Reply emailed to me on 21 Sep 2022

Tēnā koe Sharon

Thank you for your letter and your continuing interest in the literacy learning of our ākonga.

Your letter has been passed to me for reply.

You will know of the persistent inequities for some groups of ākonga in our system in spite of outstanding work from many kaiako and leaders. I agree that we need to make changes so that all ākonga experience world class literacy and communications and maths outcomes – and the wider benefits these will bring for their well-being and participating in and contributing to a well-functioning society.

The Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy (LCM Strategy) acknowledges that kaiako need to use evidence-based practices and tools that identify what ākonga need as learning progresses. A common practice model will provide clear, coherent, evidence informed guidance on how to effectively teach literacy and communication along the pathway.

The Strategy will guide action to shape the early learning and schooling system to deliver equity and excellence in teaching and learning. Action plans have been developed to guide the implementation of the strategy. This will take a phased approach and will be progressed in partnership with the education community. The work is being informed by ongoing evaluation of current and trialled approaches.

We are moving towards a more structured approach to literacy teaching and learning – and we need to take the resourcing, the kaiako, the expertise with us.

You ask a number of specific questions about the Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Support (RR&ELS) part of the current early literacy approach supported by the Ministry of Education, and I address these below.

Training for the use of the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books.

The Better Start Literacy Approach (BSLA) provides evidence-based training in the use of the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books. BSLA is a structured approach to literacy instruction for Year 0 to Year 2 classrooms, to support children's early reading, writing and oral language success. It has been developed at the University of Canterbury specifically for our New Zealand educational and cultural context and controlled research trials have proven its effectiveness. It includes the systematic teaching of critical phonological awareness skills and letter sound knowledge skills through fun, games-based activities, activities making explicit links to the reading and spelling context, and structured small group reading sessions using the new Ready to Read - Phonics Plus early readers series. In addition, the approach includes explicit teaching in vocabulary skills and in building children's oral narrative and listening comprehension skills through quality children's story books. The Better Start Literacy Approach follows a structured phonics scope and sequence that is used in the class and small group reading teaching.

The Reading Recovery Trademark

As you note, Reading Recovery (RR) is trademarked.

We are exploring, with National Reading Recovery, developments that might be possible within and beyond the trademark.

Currently RR&ELS is being used to name the support offered at the universal, targeted and individualised level by RR practitioners.

Funding for dyslexia

RR&ELS is one of many literacy supports including the Resource Teachers: Literacy workforce, Better Start Literacy Approach, Books in Homes, Accelerated Literacy Learning, Reading Together and the Literacy and Communication Packages Trials.

As we develop the actions to implement the LCM Strategy we will consider and implement the best guidance and supports, most likely to raise achievement most equitably across the sector. This will be at the universal, the targeted and the individualised level according to ākongā need.

The role of Reading Recovery teachers

Teachers being trained and supported in RR (and RR&ELS) are expected to use the approaches that align with their training.

Teachers previously trained in RR are not required to continue in using specific RR methods and can use any approaches that are effective (as agreed with their employing board through their principal).

Each year around 330 teachers are trained in RR – and another 600 or so are provided with ongoing RR PLD support.

Contracting

Current contracts for RR training and support with the Universities of Auckland, Waikato and Otago end in January 2023.

Funding

The majority of RR&ELS funding is for teacher salaries.

In 2022 approximately \$24,251,790 is being spent on RR&ELS teacher salaries. A further \$4,146,710 in teacher training and support costs is being spent.

Funding for Reading Recovery

The funding for RR is confirmed in the Government's staffing orders along with funding for other teachers in the system. It is only able to be used for RR staffing while those teachers are undergoing RR training and support.

FTE Model

Regional Ministry staff allocate RR&ELS staffing to applying schools according to their need and other factors such as school size. The FTE will reflect that.

There is an expectation that the school will make a contribution to staffing from their operational funding in addition to the Ministry funding. This too will vary.

Operational funding can be used for any supports and approaches the school deems appropriate for their ākonga.

Thank you again for writing to the Ministry. Your ongoing advocacy for the literacy learning of all our ākonga is appreciated.

Nāku noa, nā

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Te Poutāhū