



## Professional Learning and Development Accreditation

Julia Westera

My passion is reciprocal teaching<sup>1</sup>, one of the most effective teaching methods<sup>2</sup> ever developed. I am co-author of [BES Exemplar 4 Reciprocal Teaching](#), and founded **RTeach Institute**<sup>3</sup> to promote the high impact use of reciprocal teaching nation-wide – for all year levels.

### Professional Learning and Development Overview

My PLD focus is on reciprocal teaching (RT) as a core teaching and learning pedagogy – and on building on its transformational capacity with schools and Communities of Schools.

RT is a collaborative learning strategy that accelerates learning and makes a difference to student achievement in areas that matter. RT focusses on four metacognitive strategies: clarifying, questioning, summarising and predicting. The RT package can support oral language, literacy and inclusion of all students in cross-curricular learning in all learning areas. RT can be modified for specific learning of students of all ages (from 5 year olds to tertiary students) across a variety of contexts. RT is about empowering all students with collaborative problem solving and leadership skills, tuakana-teina, a growth mindset and successful thinking skills for challenging texts and tasks - all essentials for success at school and for lifelong learning.

In a new PLD initiative, I have developed modernized tools and a comprehensive methodology: **RT3T™ (Reciprocal Teaching – Three Track)**<sup>4</sup> - to scaffold school leaders and teachers in mobilizing differently to build capability and capacity in core pedagogy - over 2 to 3 years. RT3T™, comprises three tracks. The first track is accelerate, and involves coaching intensives in small groups. This track is supported by scaffolded and inquiry-based PLD. The second is the adapted track, comprising coaching intensives tailored for targeted students to strongly support their acceleration and inclusion. The third track is an all teacher focus on integration of the RT collaborative strategies and culture into regular classroom teaching across learning areas, different tasks and settings, including whanau / community. When carefully implemented with a depth of understanding and scaffolded support, results show a marked impact on achievement - after just a few weeks.

### Professional Information

- A highly regarded educational psychologist, facilitator and teacher.
- Worked in EC, primary, intermediate and secondary schools, in both urban and rural communities.
- Honorary Research Fellow at The University of Auckland, where she has convened the post-master training course for educational psychologists<sup>5</sup>, and led courses at graduate and post-masters levels in initial teacher, special, facilitator and RTLB education / PLD.
- Ground-breaking PhD on [Reciprocal Teaching as a School-Wide Inclusive Strategy](#)
- **2011**: Co-author of [BES Exemplar 4 Reciprocal Teaching](#).
- **2014**: Completed research and advisory contracts for the Ministry's BES team.
- **2014**: Speaker at the Implementing Implementation Science Conference in Cambridge, UK<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Reciprocal teaching was originally developed by world leading researchers in educational and cognitive psychology, professors Annemarie Palincsar and Ann Brown (1984).

<sup>2</sup> Professor John Hattie ranks RT as third out of the 49 most effective teaching strategies, in his book, *Visible Learning: a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement* (2009), with a 'large effect size' of 0.74 (approximately equivalent to doubling the speed of typical learning).

<sup>3</sup> For more information, visit <http://rteach.co.nz>

<sup>4</sup> Westera, J. (2014). Reciprocal Teaching: an update from a New Zealand perspective, with implications for effective school-wide implementation. *Implementing Implementation Science Conference*, Cambridge, 28 July. *The new RT3T™ is based on the key principles of RT as developed by Palincsar & Brown (1984), and is modified in response to the latest implementation science research.*

<sup>5</sup> Julia was the Convenor of the Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Psychology, Coordinator of the Masters in Special Education and Diploma in Special Education, School of Education, University of Auckland (1991-1998).

- **2015:** Presented at EARLI, the leading European conference on learning and instruction<sup>7</sup>. My paper was ranked in the top 15% in terms of relevance.
- **2014-2015:** Profiled [Reciprocal teaching: a schoolwide core teaching and learning strategy](#) in two feature articles for the Education Gazette.
- Founded RTeach Institute and developed the modernised RT3T™, to dynamically accelerate learning and empower our 21<sup>st</sup> century learners - and to mobilise schools to deeply embrace equitable pedagogy and collaborative school cultures.
- Developed operational handbooks and a website. For more information, visit <http://rteach.co.nz>
- Has extensive experience in PLD with RT as a school-wide inclusive strategy in schools (including a kura and one of our largest secondary schools) with different decile levels. From 2014 onwards Julia's focus is on the new modernised RT3T™ as an evidence-based school-wide methodology for continuous improvement.

## Summary of examples of practice

I am leading a new PLD initiative, currently with 4 primary schools and 5 secondary schools, located in Māori, Pasifika and multicultural communities. The majority of these schools are phasing in RT3T™ over 2 to 3 years, with a view to both school-wide and CoLs-wide sustainability.

With each school, I provide ongoing and in-depth support for schools – starting with strategic planning with senior leadership to develop a shared vision and action plan. This may be followed by whole staff PLD and/or targeted PLD with a strategically chosen startup team (a syndicate or department or cross-curricular team). School communities engage in this scaffolded hikoī for 2 to 3 years. Currently in the small town/rural schools I am co-working with an RT3T™ facilitator<sup>8</sup>.

Because RT is a 'complex intervention', gains can be variable, depending on the integrity of the implementation, and on continuity in PLD in a community of learning inquiry. The external RT3T™ facilitator leads the scaffolding of an inquiry-based progression of learning in a team approach, and provides in-depth modeling and support within classrooms and with RT group work.

There are now documented results of the significant impact that the coaching phase of RT3T™ can have after 5 to 8 weeks. The asTTle data of a large scale study with New Zealand secondary schools (see BES Exemplar 4) shows a similar profile to that of a recent study using RT3T™ in a low decile Pasifika primary school (Westera & Alton-Lee, 2014)<sup>9</sup>. Both these studies used an adapted version of RT with skilled trained teaching teams and demonstrate acceleration in literacy achievement and deeper (higher order) thinking skills within a short timeframe. This is occurring 'irrespective of gender, ethnicity and prior achievement levels'. That is, RT3T™ is working for top band as well as middle and low band classes. With RT3T™ we now have new data showing hugely impressive results after about 8 months - with 10 classes in a large secondary school, and for Māori and boys in both primary and secondary schools. Teachers are also reporting 'exciting shifts' for seniors with special needs, and in results for scholarship. For bargraphs and more, visit <http://rteach.co.nz>

## Referees

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<sup>6</sup> Westera, J. (2014). Reciprocal Teaching: an update from a New Zealand perspective, with implications for effective school-wide implementation. *Implementing Implementation Science Conference*, Cambridge, 28 July.

<sup>7</sup> Westera, J. (2015). Reciprocal Teaching: Towards high impact results: inferential questioning and other key elements. Paper presented at EARLI, Cyprus.

<sup>8</sup> RTeach will be collaborating with Evaluation Associates to provide a pool of accredited RT3T™ facilitators.

<sup>9</sup> Westera, J. & Alton-Lee, A. (2014). Reciprocal Teaching: An Implementation Case. *Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme | Hei Kete Raukura*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

