

Best Practice Guidance for
Boards of Trustees and Principals
Classroom Release Time

These guidelines

were prepared by New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa (NZEI Te Riu Roa), New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) and the Ministry of Education in accordance with the Primary Teachers' Collective Agreement Terms of Settlement, to assist schools in reviewing their Classroom Release Time policies, entitlement, and use.

Background

Classroom Release Time (“CRT”) is non-contact time provided in the Primary Teachers’ Collective Agreement (“PTCA”), that is available to most classroom teachers. The recently ratified 2023 PTCA provided significant increases to CRT entitlements. It is timely for school leaders and school boards to review their CRT policies and arrangements to ensure compliance with the PTCA.

The intent of CRT is to support teacher workload while maximising benefits for student learning. A school’s CRT policy should reflect this intent.



The key obligations for school leaders and school boards are to:

Become familiar with the new PTCA provisions on CRT (see Appendix A of this resource).

Review your school’s CRT policy in consultation with your teaching staff.

Prepare for the introduction of increased CRT entitlements.

Plan for the cost of CRT for board funded teachers.

School policy on CRT must adhere to the provisions of the PTCA. For further information or guidance see www.nzsta.org.nz

CRT provisions from the PTCA are attached at Appendix A.

What is CRT?

CRT is non-contact time provided in the PTCA that is available to many classroom teachers. CRT entitlements in the PTCA provide classroom teachers with time out of the classroom each term to do non-contact work such as:

- planning
- evaluation
- reporting
- personal professional development
- research
- syndicate meetings.

It is important that CRT should be viewed differently to any release time already provided to teachers for specific 'non classroom' responsibilities such as management and responsibility.

The school may want to identify this additional 'release time' as part of the classroom release time policy to maintain the distinction.

CRT is a distinct form of release time to help reduce the workload of classroom teachers while maximising the benefits to student learning. Unless agreed otherwise, teachers usually stay onsite during their allocated CRT. However, schools do have the freedom to create different arrangements in this respect.

During their absence from the classroom, the teacher's class is taught by another teacher. Many larger schools employ release teachers for the specific purpose of covering teachers who are released from their classroom. We anticipate that this practice will become more common with the increase in CRT entitlements that the new PTCA provides.

The CRT entitlements in this guidance do not apply to:

- The principal and any teachers covered by the STCA or ASTCA
- Itinerant resource teachers (i.e., RTLBs, RTLits, RTMs, RTDs, RTVs¹)
- Other itinerant teachers
- Release teachers (i.e., teachers who are specifically employed to cover the CRT entitlements of other teachers)
- Speech language therapists
- Learning Support Coordinators.

1 Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour, Resource Teachers Literacy, Resource Teachers Māori, Resource Teachers Deaf and Resource Teachers Vision.

Who is eligible for CRT?

To be eligible for CRT, you must be:

- a. a classroom teacher,
- b. employed either full time or for at least 0.8 FTTE,² and
- c. employed in either:
 - i) a permanent role, or
 - ii) a long-term relieving position of at least one term's duration.

You need to be a classroom teacher to be eligible for CRT under the PTCA, because the CRT provided in the PTCA is contingent on you having classroom responsibilities that you can be released from.



a. Classroom teacher

In determining whether someone is a classroom teacher, you should consider whether the teacher holds the responsibility for the planning, implementation, assessment, evaluation, and reporting for a group of students within the school. In most circumstances, determining whether someone is a classroom teacher is straightforward. However, care must be taken to ensure that teachers in hybrid roles are not disadvantaged. So, if you have an employee who works as a classroom teacher but who also does some release teacher work as part of their role, you should err on the side of caution and consider them a classroom teacher for the purposes of allocating CRT.



b. Employed for at least 0.8 FTTE

A teacher is employed for at least 0.8 FTTE if they work the equivalent of four full days per week. A teacher's letter of appointment should stipulate their teaching load in FTTE. You can find a table translating different teaching hours into FTTE on Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | Ministry of Education website [here](#).

Teachers with two or more part-time teaching appointments

To evaluate whether a teacher is entitled to CRT, each individual teaching position is considered independently. So, a teacher working 0.4 FTTE at School A and 0.4 FTTE at School B is not eligible for CRT under the PTCA even though their cumulative teaching load is 0.8 FTTE.

² This requirement does not apply to the newly introduced release time for holders of permanent units.

Job Shares

Special rules apply for teachers who are employed in formal job share positions that are created under clause 2.2.6 of the PTCA. Employees in formal job shares will receive CRT based on the job share split, even if a job sharer is working below 0.8 FTTE. This is because a formal job share is essentially treated as one full-time position for the purposes of CRT. It is critical to note though that this special rule only applies to formal job shares under clause 2.2.6 of the PTCA. It does not apply to the more common scenario where two part-time teachers just happen to share a classroom without their employment being formally linked to each other in any way.



c. Employed in a permanent or long-term relieving position

A permanent employee is someone who has accepted permanent employment at your school irrespective of whether the employee is full-time or part-time. Anyone who is not employed on a fixed-term agreement is employed permanently. If you have any questions about this, you should contact NZSTA or your NZEI Te Riu Roa Principal Support Officer.³

Per clause 1.6.9 of the PTCA, a “long-term reliever” is a fixed-term employee employed for a continuous period of more than 3 weeks. However, only long-term relievers who are employed for at least one term are eligible for CRT. Short-term relievers (who are employed on a casual basis for a period of 3 weeks or less) are not eligible for CRT.

³ See Appendix B for contact details.

CRT entitlements

What has changed?

Up until the end of the 2023 school year, eligible full-time teachers will continue to receive **10 hours of CRT** per term as they have done under previous versions of the PTCA. Part-time teachers who are employed 0.8 FTTE or above will receive CRT at a prorated amount.

From Term 1 2024, primary teachers' CRT entitlements will be as follows:

Stage 1: Term 1, 2024

Teachers' CRT entitlements will increase from 10 hours per term to **15 hours** per term (prorated for part-timers of 0.8 FTTE or above).

Stage 2: Term 3, 2024

Teachers' CRT entitlements will increase further from 15 hours per term to **20 hours** per term (prorated for part-timers of 0.8 FTTE or above).

Stage 3: Term 1, 2025

- a. Teachers' CRT entitlements will increase from 20 hours per term to **25 hours per term** (prorated for part-timers of 0.8 FTTE or above)

AND

- b. Teachers who hold **one or more permanent units will get an ADDITIONAL 10 hours of CRT per term** from Term 1, 2025. This additional release time is not prorated for part-time teachers, therefore a part-time teacher who holds one or more permanent units will receive the entire 10 hour per term CRT entitlement. A full-time classroom teacher who holds a permanent unit will receive a minimum of 35 hours of CRT per term.

CRT policy

Schools are required to have a policy for the allocation of CRT which has been developed and maintained in consultation with its teachers.

As a result of the increases to CRT in the recent PTCA settlement, it is recommended that school boards review their CRT policy. It is important this is undertaken in consultation with your staff.

A school's CRT policy must adhere to the requirements of the PTCA, namely clause 3.28 (see Appendix A). Templates for a compliant CRT policy are available from the NZSTA [here](#).

The CRT policy must identify the allocation and use of CRT and may include a description and use of other release time provisions.

The consultation process will require meeting(s) with teaching staff. The principal should consider what information needs to be circulated prior to the meeting, including the intended timeframe for the consultation process and the process for confirming the final decision on school policy. For further information on staff consultation please see [NZEI Te Riu Roa's document Member Guidance: Consultation on Classroom Release Time](#).

When updating a policy, it is recommended that a review initially occurs on an annual basis. The policy should also include an indication of the triggers which may prompt an earlier review such as:

- Staff turnover
- Recruitment/retention issues
- New education initiatives
- Change of school classification
- Concern about student learning
- Any other genuine concern

Emphasis should be given to identifying and implementing the use of CRT so that it is professionally useful for the school's teaching and learning programmes, the teacher's professional growth and the learning needs of the students. Appropriate evaluation of the effective use of CRT should be part of the school review process. The school policy should also stipulate how the PTCA allocations to CRT will be met each term i.e., by weekly allocations, fortnightly allocations etc. The only requirement in this respect is that each term eligible teachers get what they are entitled to under the PTCA.

FAQs

What happens when it is not possible to deliver CRT to a teacher?

There will be times when it is not possible to provide CRT to a teacher. At these times common sense must prevail. The policy must provide for situations where, for genuine reasons during the term planning or at short notice, the CRT cannot be provided without compromising the educational requirements of students. Genuine reasons will usually be those outside of the control of the school.

For example, a teacher may be sick on their CRT day, or they are one of very few employees who are able to work due to widespread sickness and the school would have to close if the teacher received their CRT on their planned day.

Where these kinds of exceptional circumstances apply, employer and employees should work together in good faith to find a mutually acceptable solution. If an employee cannot have their CRT at a time that was previously agreed to, it is frequently possible to simply shift this CRT day to a different time by mutual agreement. Schools should keep a log of non-delivery of CRT, and this should be considered as part of the CRT policy review process.

How are these new CRT entitlements going to be resourced?

The required increase in staffing for the classroom release time of teachers who are paid through Teacher Salaries will be provided through increased staffing that will incrementally be introduced from 2024 onwards. Teachers who are board-funded do not factor into this staffing calculation as they sit outside of the calculations in the Staffing Order. Accordingly, the costs of resourcing the additional release time of board-funded teachers will fall on the employing school board. School boards will need to plan for this now and seek advice from NZSTA where necessary.

How do the new CRT entitlements interact with other release time entitlements?

Where classroom teachers are provided with other forms of release time, for example, because they are a beginning teacher and have access to Beginning Teacher Release Time or they are in a role where the board receives additional staffing to enable the functions of the role to be fulfilled (i.e. kāhui ako teachers), the teacher's "special" release time entitlements will sit on top of the new base entitlements for all classroom teachers (as discussed above). As an example, a full-time first year teacher would still receive the full benefit of their 0.2 FTTE beginning teacher time allowance⁴ on top of also being able to access the additional 25 hours ordinary classroom release time per term from 2025 onwards.

Where a teacher receives additional release time as the result of the school's CRT policy, the matter can potentially become more complex, and is more dependent on the individual school's CRT policy and the purpose that this additional release time has been provided for. We encourage school boards to contact NZSTA if they have any questions about this. Principals who are NZEI Te Riu Roa members can also contact the Principal Support Helpline at 0508 774 624 725.

4 Part of this BT release time may be used for the mentor teacher to be able to observe the beginning teacher ("BT"), but all of the release time must be used in a way that directly benefits the BT.

Appendix A

Excerpt from Primary Teachers' Collective Agreement 2023-2025

Clause 3.28 Classroom Release Time (CRT)

3.28.1 Every full-time permanent teacher, or long-term reliever employed for at least a term, shall receive classroom release time per term as follows:

- (a) Until the end of Term 4, 2023, 10 hours per term;
- (b) From Term 1, 2024, 15 hours per term;
- (c) From Term 3, 2024, 20 hours per term;
- (d) From Term 1, 2025, 25 hours per term.

3.28.2 Every part-time teacher employed for at least 0.8 FTTE per week who is either permanently employed or a long-term reliever employed for at least a term, shall receive a prorated amount of classroom release time as that described in 3.28.1.

3.28.3 Every employer shall, in consultation with teachers, develop and maintain a policy for the allocation of classroom release time.

3.28.4 Classroom release time will be allocated according to policy developed as described in 3.28.3 above, except where it is not possible for genuine reasons arising at short notice.

Note: *Guidelines for the appropriate use of classroom release time are available on both the NZEI Te Riu Roa and Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga websites.*

3.28.5 Permanent Unit Holders

From Term 1, 2025, every teacher who holds one or more permanent units shall receive ten hours classroom release per term. This is in addition to the classroom release time entitlements set out in 3.28.1 and 3.28.2

Appendix B

Relevant Contact details

For more information, please contact NZEI Te Riu Roa or NZSTA:

New Zealand Educational Institute Te Riu Roa

Principals' Helpline:

0508 PRINCIPAL (0508 774 624 725)

Member Support Centre:

0800 693 443

Email: nzei@nzei.org.nz

New Zealand School Trustees Association

NZSTA Governance and Employment Advice and Support

Phone: 0800 782 435

Email: govadvice@nzsta.org.nz or eradvice@nzsta.org.nz

NZSTA National Office – General Enquiries

Phone: 0800 782 435 (option 5)