

## **An affective mapping of choices, aspirations and belonging; inspiring a STEM trajectory during an Australian rural student science exchange program**

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There remains a significant difference in educational achievements and capacity to aspire between regional, rural and remote students in comparison to their city peers. This is due to various limitations on educative experiences at rural schools. The capacity to aspire for young people is significant, as you cannot be what you cannot see. Rural exchange programs, such as reported on here, that expand knowledge, ability, motivation and feelings of belonging could increase the interest and persistence in STEM education for rural students. My affective mapping of participants' felt experiences undergone during this regional exchange program found that students had increased feelings of self-efficacy and belonging that enhanced both aspiration and motivation to continue in STEM fields on return to their home rural school. The qualitative data created through students open-text responses provided a deep insight into the positive affective impact of this regional exchange program on the participating students.