

**Reimagining Futures in
Science, Technology,
Environmental and
Mathematics Education
(STEME)**

To: *All Welcome*

When: 11 September 2008
3.00 -4.30pm

Rm: m2.13 Bldg: M

School of Education

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**Presenters: Russell Tytler and David
Symington**

**Supporting professional learning for subject teachers
in rural and regional Victoria**

This paper will report on a study of the provision of professional development for teachers of mathematics and science in rural and regional Victoria. The data gathering began with interviews with six Regional Project Officers with special responsibility for this issue. They were asked to suggest schools which would illustrate best practice in professional development in mathematics and science. From those nominated seven schools were selected that included primary and secondary schools, schools in different districts, and schools of varying sizes.

Interviews were conducted, each of approximately one hour, with seven principals and a total of 37 teachers of mathematics and science, concerning teacher professional learning in rural schools. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed to identify the issues raised and the thinking of the study participants around these issues. The data clearly reveal that, even within these schools which had been identified as illustrating best practice, there are significant problems related to rurality in ensuring that professional development opportunities adequately address the needs of the teachers responsible for science and mathematics. The paper will identify the main features of these problems, and will present a model which locates professional learning in science and mathematics in three discourse communities; the school, the local community, and the wider community of science and mathematics education professionals. It will discuss the professional learning problems and possibilities revealed in these interviews in terms of tensions and synergies between these communities. The paper will consider questions about the allocation of resources and the key sites for decision making in a complex of competing demands.