## 3.JTE-16-09-0060.R3

Reframing for Social Justice: The Influence of Critical Friendship Groups on Preservice Teachers' Reflective Practice

A primary goal of teacher preparation programs should be to develop the reflective capacities of preservice teachers, especially social justice oriented programs that prepare teachers to increase access to rigorous, relevant, critical, and engaging educational experiences for young adolescents, particularly historically underserved youth. Through analysis of participants' discussion boards, this qualitative case study examines common dilemmas for a group of 11 diverse undergraduate preservice middle school teachers and descriptions of their process during "critical friendship" group protocols. Results reveal most dilemmas revolved around relationships with others, curriculum and instruction, and perceived deficiencies of students. However, through the process of engaging in reflective conversations supported by classroom activities, some participants re-envisioned initial dilemmas, such as reframing deficiency views as pedagogical or relationship issues. Additionally, all participants articulated benefits of the critical friendship group meetings in their reflections. Implications for improving supports for critical, collaborative reflection during student teaching are discussed.

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