**Reviewer Response Table for “It Might Just Take a Partnership…”  
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The Reviewers’ feedback begins with the statement from Reviewer 1 below, which summarizes our manuscript. The table that follows takes each point of Reviewer 1 and 2 and addresses each one. On a few points, primarily from Reviewer 1, we believe that a broader, central issue is raised, so our responses to these points are extensive.

Reviewer 1: This article provides a "Needs Assessment Instrument" for identifying the unique demographics, needs and characteristics of 13 high-needs district partners. It presents research where this survey tool was presented to a number of district partners, it then discusses the outcomes of these data in quantitative terms.

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| **Reviewer 1 Comments** | **Authors’ Responses** |
| The survey tool is included as an appendix. I think its inclusion is important as it helped me as the reader to make more sense of the evidence and it is also available should I want to use it as a model. I think a specific note directing the reader to the usefulness of reading the tool before or while reading the findings would be most useful. | We also believe the inclusion of the instrument helps explain the results and can be used as a model. We added information on page 8 at the beginning of the methods section to “see Appendix for complete instrument.” |
| Although I would consider this article to be well written, contextualised in some important and relevant literature, to be research based and be on an important topic, it does leave me as the reader, with one main question. This is to do with how the paper and the research findings themselves are positioned. That is, in relational solutions that emerge from "centuries old [Indigenous] wisdom". I would certainly agree with these findings myself but I asked myself did you need the research to prove this finding or did it emerge from the research? | We appreciate the positive feedback to open this point. Regarding the use of the “it takes a village” proverb, we contend that this well-known adage is not being supported uniformly across the educational world. As the rest of our introduction reads, we believe that too often universities, governments, and other organizations may be showing up to help, but they’re not listening to what the communities actually need. Too often, as noted in our explanation, we contend that helpers show up with “ready made” programs, rather than tailoring them to the dynamic environments and specific needs. As such, this work aims to highlight the need for tailored efforts, which begins by understanding the needs of the partners. We appreciate the reviewer’s consideration of this point, and we contend that our findings do emerge from the investigation rather than from our anticipation of them. Specifically, as we note in the concluding paragraph, “plans and resources were also put in place to…individualize the services provided…” |
| There is, in the demographic section of the needs assessment instrument, a question about the country in which these districts are located that links directly to the Native American populations. | The question is asking in which county the district is located, and the available responses are the names of Arizona counties, rather than populations. We added the word “Arizona” to the question to read “In what county within Arizona is your district located?” as the reviewer makes a reasonable point that those outside of Arizona may also draw this errant conclusion. |
| It also identifies in the literature section, statistics related to the Native American population and it sends a very relational partnership message in the title, in the introduction and in the findings. However, the voices of these key stakeholders, are silent and marginalised. The opportunity to write these groups into this paper, in my opinion is in the introductory proverb. Furthermore, I am interested as to why the author(s) went to Africa, when there could well have made more authentic links to the traditional beliefs of the various Native communities. I am almost certain that relational proverbs are present in these communities. I think this would have added legitimacy to the overall findings, and added a purpose for the question being in the tool in the first place. This may have also ensured some connectivity between the voices of the school districts and the voices of the communities in which they are located. While it identifies the problem of "less powerful families having little influence over what happens in these schools" I believe it would benefit from beginning to ask more critical questions of the research findings in terms of the communities in which these low achieving school districts are sited. I would ask, an educational partnership approach as defined by whom, for whom and ultimately, for whose benefit?  I believe if the author(s) consider these questions and find a way to give authentic voice to these home communities, even by posing the questions themselves, it will benefit this paper. | Extended response is needed to address this point.   * First, we used the African proverb because it is not specific to one of the tribes with whom we are working, but it is ubiquitous within the educational world and fits well with our primary point as further addressed in the introduction. * Second, we believe the reviewer (as in the point above) notes we are working across different countries, rather the demographic question was simply to understand which county the district was located. * Third, we are surprised by the reviewer’s note that the group’s voices are “silent and marginalized.” The explicit purpose of our paper is to acknowledge the need for work that builds targeted collaborations with each stakeholder group. Throughout our paper, the introduction, literature review, and methods, we continually affirm our position that tailored services are needed to address specific problems in specific communities. We do not separate out each of the 13 district responses, as we’re not attempting to showcase the issues raised by each district, rather our paper is intended to build a case as to why it is important when working with groups to get their voices into the discussion. The purpose of our needs assessment was to understand what issues were problematic within each of our partner communities. We believe, as noted by the reviewer, we continually reiterate and drive home this message. Our paper is not dedicated to the Native American populations, rather our paper is dedicated to understanding the voices of all of our partner districts equally – meaning, each location has different needs and we must be prepared to deliver different, individualized services to each of those locations. We do not privilege the Native American districts, or the border districts, or the urban districts. Rather, we showcase that we are working across groups, and that each group needs to be given an opportunity to articulate their concerns. Our paper, again, is not intended to provide an explanation of what our districts need exactly or their relative struggles, as to do so would be to provide examples of what we are advocating against – the process of building “services to generic problems.” Further, none of the Native American tribes are the same. We are not generalizing across the different tribes any more than we are generalizing from the Hispanic, black, white, and Asian students. Rather, we contend that to do valid work and provide real help and build trustworthy partnerships, researchers must begin by being present, talking with and observing what is happening, and providing an instrument to the district and school leaders to give listen to their voices. * Fourth, the confirmation of our IRB with the tribes and districts is to only present data in aggregate form, as they do not want to air “their own dirty laundry.” We are not in a position to provide by-district information, as to do so would again undermine our primary point, which is that researchers need to stop providing one-size-fits-all programs, and get off of the university campus and out into the schoolhouses and communities to ask what is happening before trying to provide a solution. We believe our paper acknowledges this point. * Fifth, we agree with the reviewer in that the paper would benefit from a reiteration of our discussion of who is a “partnership,” which we describe at the close of the introduction. We have added restatements of our description of an educational partnership as “transformative, equity based, beneficial for all partners, and based on relationships” into the beginning of the methods section (p. 9) and conclusion (p. 20). We believe that these statements remind readers of our operationalization of partnership. |
| Finally, a small matter, under the heading on “Teacher Professional Development”, beginning of the second sentence, it looks like the words, "Respondents most" should read, Most respondents. | The statement is adjusted to read “Most respondents…” |
| **Reviewer 2 Comments** | **Authors’ Responses** |
| Elimination of unsubstantiated claims   * Page 1 paragraph 1 – care for the poor communities * Page 3 paragraph 2 – Republican-dominated Arizona devalues education * Page 4 line 3 and 4 – one of the only times in history supported education system * Page 6 lines 5 and 6 – transformative potential has not been realized * Page 7 paragraph 2 – partnerships more effective in climate of mutual trust * Page 16 paragraph 2 – college helped make this a state priority | All claims were either eliminated or substantiated with the appropriate resources. |
| Clarify reporting and analysis of data   * Page 8 paragraph 1 - the phrase “ensure that each partnership was of mutual benefit” and “meet the unique needs” was confusing because methodology used to analyze the data aggregated results. * Page 9 “Data Collection” it was unclear how many superintendents completed the survey alone versus how many used a team. | * We added this sentence to clarify this: “While districts often reported having common needs, for example as many of the districts reported wanting assistance building appropriate teacher evaluation systems, the goal here was still to individualize even if common responses emerged.” This was also referenced in the abstract and elsewhere, noting, for example, that the goal was to present district partners’ collective and individualized needs along with implications. * This number is unknown as we did not collect any information, mainly to protect respondents’ identities, regarding who besides the superintendent was reporting on the district’s behalf. The paragraph explaining the “Data Collection” method was adjusted to provide a clearer explanation by adding “however, researchers are unable to discern how many superintendents responded individually compared to those responding with additional team members, which allowed for a level of anonymity for the respondents.” |
| Mean Scores - Appendix - Is a score 1 equal to “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree.” Either way it appears that a score 3 relates to “unsure” yet in the data analysis:   * Page 10 Teacher Induction the mean of 3.3 is described as “value” * Page 11 Teacher Professional Development the mean of 3.1 is described as “neutral” * Page 12 Administrator Professional Development the mean of 3.5 is described as “agreed” * Page 13 Research and Evaluation the mean of 2.5 is described as “neutral” * Page 14 Teacher Evaluation the mean of 2.7 is “rather neutral” * Page 15 Implications the mean of 3.3 is described as “agreed” | We adjusted this in the text to match what was correct, and what was in the instrument in the Appendix. The Appendix is now labeled accordingly as well. Most notably “Unsure” = 2 which aligns with the scores below.   * 3.3 = “value” is correct * 3.1 = “value” is correct. The next sentence, after the comma, discusses neutrality for whether what was being provided met their needs * 3.5 = “agreed” is correct * 2.5 = “neutral” is correct, more or less. We added the word “relatively” to neutral to account for these data and scores as relational. * We did the same here. * 3.3 = “agreed” is correct |
| Qualitative Data   * In the “Implication” section the link back to the specific items highlighted in the “Data Collection” section was vague. At times it almost appeared as if new data was being presented.   + Page 15 paragraph 1 – “federal and state mandates”   + Page 17 lines 1 and 2 – clash with current district initiatives | We constructed this section to resituate the numerical findings using the words of the participants. This section was meant to be written at a broader level, yet utilizing the local perspective. While new data were not being presented, we wrote this section again preserving their perspectives as best we could, and of course using their words, which may have been interpreted as new data. The only thing new, however, was the presentation of the findings in their, not our words. |
| Reframe the focus of the paper   * The “Introduction” articulates the relationship between collaboration and improvement in student learning * “Glimmers of New Hope” through the “Literature Review” focus on struggles related to institutions of higher education and K-12 schools forming collaborative relationships with no connection to student achievement. | We do not agree that the paper needs to be refocused, but we do agree that uses of the terms student learning or achievement may have caused this confusion; hence, we removed all references to student learning and achievement unless necessary for context. Our intent was not to look at student achievement in the particular but student learning as a general goal. We feel the edits we made in this section now more clearly focus our manuscript on the goal of collaboration. |
| Most of the articles used to substantiate the lack of strong collaboration between institutes of higher education and K-12 districts was dated. Significant work has recently been done in the area of the clinical teacher preparation model and professional development schools that makes today’s relative different than the one the authors present. | Thank you for this critique; we have updated this section, specifically adding approximately ten newer and still relevant resources in support. |
| The “Methods” sections focused on identifying areas K-12 district needs with no clear connection to desires for collaboration with institutions of higher education. | We added a statement to the framework guiding the work (Teital) at the close of the first paragraph in the Methods section.  Also, as is often the case in such projects, the districts had signed off to be part of the project because they believed that dollars were ultimately going to be used in their schools. Where we are focusing our manuscript is on the argument that we do not want to be perceived as business as usual, which is what happens (as noted in the introduction, literature, and discussion) when universities show up with readymade solutions. Our manuscript posits that collaboration begins by asking what is needed in the schools and building a tailored plan with them rather than for them. |
| “Findings and Implications” returned to the topic of collaboration but more through the lens of how the focus university provided support. There was not clear information related to how the needs study was used as to develop collaboration and connection to student achievement was once again missing. | See comments above (about student learning and achievement), but the goal here was not to examine the direct link to student achievement, especially given the purpose of this study. This was about conducting a needs assessment that is used to ultimately help turn around some of our state’s highest needs schools. As we are now just over two years in on our grant work, only now are we beginning to look at the individualized services we are providing and whether we are in fact helping to promote student achievement gains. Again, our manuscript makes a central call that the district’s need to be part of designing the services plan, rather than simply being informed of what is available to them. We believe the corrections and adjustments as noted above help make this point more clearly and reduce any confusion. |
| The “Conclusion” page 19 last paragraph challenges teacher education programs to address the “onslaught of criticism” which was not at any point a theme in the paper. | We deleted this section along with the reference cited. |
| The overuse of pronouns at times makes the flow of the paper awkward. | We have edited the paper thoroughly, and we noted several points (particularly on page 1, 11, in the results section) where multiple “they” pronouns are used in describing the districts/superintendents/respondents. Throughout, where useful, we created complex sentences to avoid redundancies and reduce some of the “choppiness” in the readability. Most commonly, we replaced the initial pronoun with the corresponding proper noun. |
| References   * The Wikipedia footnote on page 1 is not in the reference section * The reference for the Cowan-Fletcher book was not found in the body of your paper * The reference for the US Department of Education (1983) was not found in the body of your paper | The Wikipedia reference is now cited in the reference section instead of in a footnote. We also removed the other two references. |