

NOLA Public Schools Superintendent Profile

A Survey of New Orleans Charter School Leaders



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Background

This June, Dr. Henderson Lewis announced that he would not seek to renew his contract as superintendent of NOLA Public Schools. This announcement concludes a significant chapter in the history of public schools in New Orleans—schools are now part of a unified district and leaders are planning for the post-COVID-19 era.

The next superintendent will set the tone of the next chapter for our schools. What must this next leader believe, prioritize, and be able to accomplish?

With this in mind, NSNO solicited input from board chairs and CMO/single-site school leaders on the competencies, experiences, and mindsets needed in New Orleans' next superintendent.

Overview of Charter Leader Survey

Overview of Survey

The survey was sent to all NOLA-PS charter school CEOs, single site leaders, and charter board chairs.

The survey contained 24 questions and leaders were asked to complete the survey within a two-week window.

Question Set 1: Indicator Ratings

Rate the importance of a series of three indicators: Competencies, Mindsets, and Qualifications.

Question Set 2: Written Responses

Share comments or additional indicators that should be considered as part of the profile.

Provide anecdotes, experiences, and examples.

Indicator Set 1: Competencies

Demonstrated measurable and tangible success in meeting specific outcomes or performing a particular task or responsibility.

Indicator Set 2: Mindsets

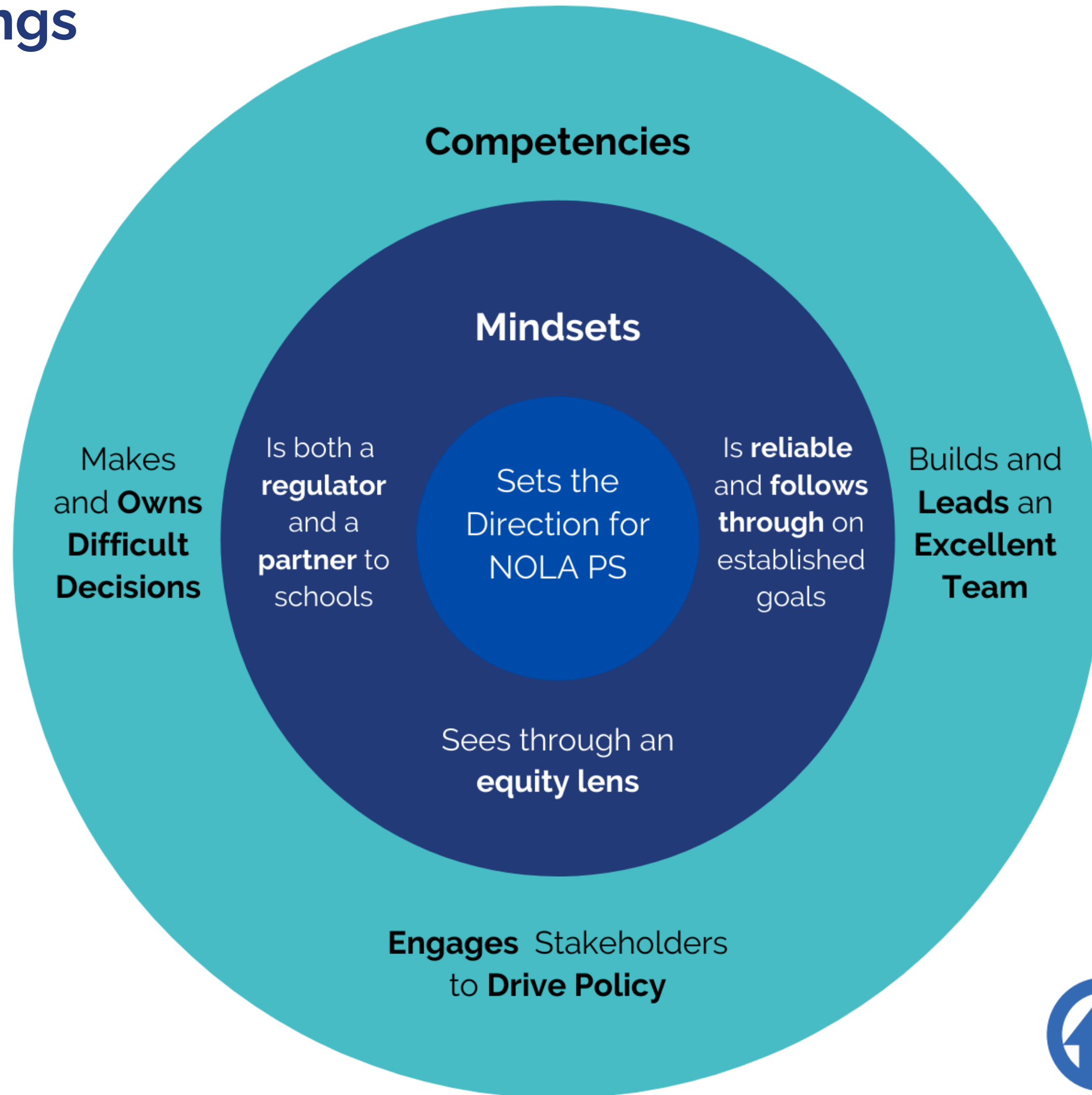
An established set of attitudes or beliefs.

Indicator Set 3: Qualifications

Credentials, or roles or positions previously held by the candidate.



Themes of Findings



Competency 1: Set the Direction

Create a clear and compelling vision, theories of action, strategic priorities, and goals that are tailored to improve outcomes in our decentralized school system.



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Competency 2: Engage Stakeholders

Collaborate across stakeholders (board members, charter organization leaders, OPSB members, city/state entities, elected officials) to drive policy decisions that best position all organizations to serve students well in New Orleans.



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Competency 3: Make and Own Difficult Decisions

When consensus is not possible, prioritize clearly communicating the importance of and rationale for difficult decisions.



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Mindset 1: Equity Lens

Drives toward an organizational vision that is deeply rooted in equitable education access and outcomes for all students, as well as prioritizing and advancing racial equity.



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Mindset 2: Regulator and Partner

Establishes and executes fair, consistent authorization practices to hold schools accountable for performance and compliance; also treats schools as partners by seeking out school leaders to provide meaningful feedback and collaboration to help improve district processes.



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Mindset 3: Reliability and Follow-Through

Models consistency in action and follow-through, while building trust with others through reliability; understands the importance of accountability and follow-through across the entire organization.



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Qualifications

None of the qualifications were rated as highly as any of the other indicators in the mindset and competencies categories.

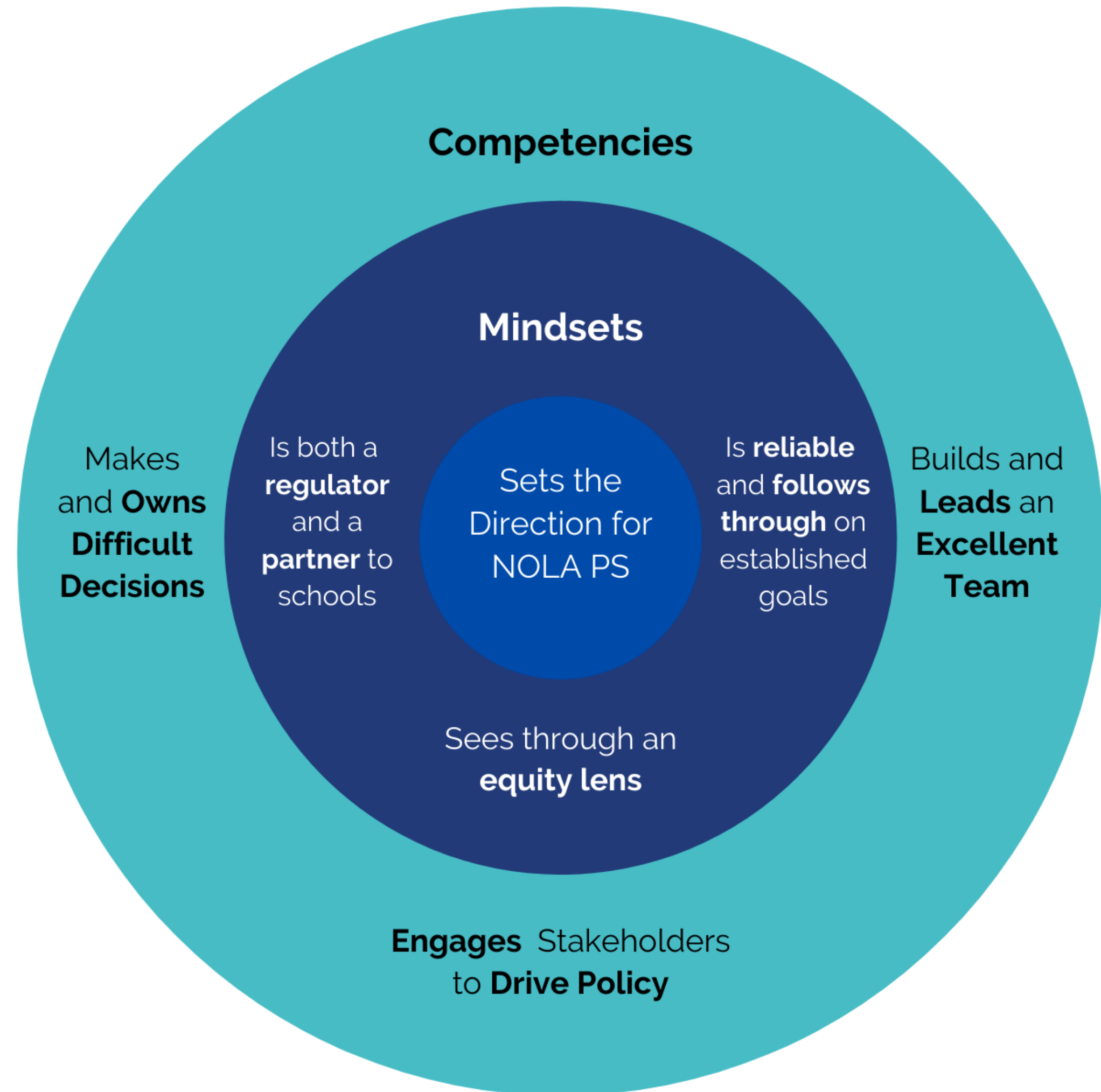
Qualifications: Building, Leading, and Retaining an Excellent Team

The written responses included a trend of valuing a track record of leading/retaining a talented team over specific experience in any particular leadership role.

Themes of Findings

The search process should:

- Measure these specific mindsets and competencies
- Elevate the the importance of mindsets and competencies over “qualifications” (specific job titles, credentials, or degrees)
- Prioritize candidates who excel in “setting the direction” (creating a clear and compelling vision, theories of action, strategic priorities, and goals)



Slide added after meeting based on leader feedback given during the meeting

Implications for Search Process: Additional Feedback from Charter Leaders

- **The search process must be able to clearly identify the vision/direction each candidate wants to set for our system. There are many important and unique policies and principles that drive NOLA-PS' work. We must be able to understand whether candidates seek to oppose and undo these things, or work to maintain and evolve them.**
- **The search process must clearly define what equity means in our system and at the district-level in order to be able to understand whether candidates have an “equity-lens” mindset.**
- **Charter leaders are eager to offer support, ideas, and feedback to OPSB throughout the search process.**

Slide added after meeting based on leader feedback given during the meeting

Implications for Search Process: Additional Feedback from Charter Leaders

- **Share as much information as possible publicly (candidate's answer to questions, performance tasks, selection committee notes and ratings); this will enable charter leaders and others to provide helpful feedback to board members throughout the process**
- **Perform deep reference checks in order to get a more fully informed picture of the candidate's competencies and mindsets**
- **Charter leaders are willing and eager to support by: contributing candidate questions and performance task scenarios; participating in search committees; and meeting with finalist candidates**