



# 8 UNIQUE FACTS ABOUT SLA-MS

## Science Leadership Academy Middle School

Opened Fall 2016 as a Philadelphia public school in the Innovation Network and designed in partnership with Drexel University, Science Leadership Academy Middle School (SLA-MS) is a 5-8 middle school that values the potential of every student.

We offer a diverse urban education with a project-based, five-step approach to learning:

1. Inquiry
2. Research
3. Collaboration
4. Presentation
5. Reflection

Three essentials questions form the basis of instruction at SLAMS:

- How do we learn?
- What can we create?
- What does it mean to lead?

- 1.** With 360 students, SLA-MS attracts public, charter and private school students from nearly every zip code across Philadelphia. Students from Samuel Powel Elementary, a feeder school for SLA-MS, represent about one-third of our student body. About 15% of our students live in the neighborhood.
- 2.** Located in West Philadelphia near Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania, we routinely utilize local resources for teaching, such as the ExCITE Center, First Hand at the Science Center, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the University City Arts League, Squash Smarts and more.
- 3.** We moved into a new school building in spring 2021. We are located at 36th and Warren (site of the old University City High School). It's a two schools/one campus model: Samuel Powel Elementary will be located on the first floor; SLA-MS will be on the second floor, with shared facilities including a full-size gymnasium, cafeteria and library. As an inquiry-driven school, SLA-MS is building a large Makerspace for exploration and creation.
- 4.** As a project-based school, we believe in learning by doing and showing. Our teachers design the curriculum, focusing on essential questions that guide meaningful learning. While we do not teach to the test, our units do align to grade-level Pennsylvania state standards.
- 5.** SLA-MS builds structures for teachers to know students well and vice versa. Fifth and 6th graders are organized into multi-age teams called Voyager and Pathfinder (combined 7th and 8th grade teams are called Phoenix and Zephyr). This team "looping" model allows students to stay with the same core teachers for two years – building relationships, engagement and understanding while creating positive leadership opportunities for 6th and 8th graders. Teachers plan curriculum that give students access to grade level standards for two years, with the ability to move on when ready.
- 6.** Every student at SLA-MS is assigned to an advisory group their first year. This advisor (a faculty member) serves as your primary contact to SLA-MS. Students stay in the same advisory for four years, allowing for deeper relationships and ongoing collaboration between students, families and advisors.
- 7.** In addition to core subjects like math, science and humanities (reading, writing, social studies), we offer quarterly rotation electives for all students: Techsploration, Art, Pre-Engineering and Health/Physical Education. We also provide time for students to pursue individual interests, working alone or in groups in a class called Rover, as well as through specialized mini-courses taught by volunteers and community members.
- 8.** Every student at SLA-MS receives a Chromebook laptop beginning in 5th grade, which students carry home and back to school each day. While we do not believe in homework for homework's sake, we do encourage students to take time outside of class to continue learning through projects, games or additional research.