Almost 1,000 students attend the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Valley Region Elementary School #6 in Panorama City, with its naturally lit classrooms, fresh-air ventilation and outdoor teaching spaces, designed by Irvine-based MVE Institutional (MVEI). The school houses 38 teaching stations in a 70,360-square-foot facility on an infill parcel of only 4.31 acres in this city located northwest of downtown Los Angeles in the San Fernando Valley.

MVEI's design, certified by the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS), addresses the urban challenges of a large student population, a compact site and a varied neighborhood

context.

{sidebar id=2}
{sidebar id=1}

The new school is bordered by a park and a mix of building types, including apartments, single-family homes and a church. LAUSD mandated that Elementary School #6 blend with the established look of the community, while evoking distinction as a public building. In developing the school's design, MVEI met with the district, community members, school personnel and Panorama City officials.

To account for the limited space of the site, MVEI designed a "double-loaded" corridor for the main classroom building and articulated the space with multiple courtyards that also serve as flexible outdoor learning environments. The courtyards—situated to be easily supervised—border the center of the campus and the playfields, to maximize the sense of open space and create intimate gathering nodes to encourage small-group interaction and learning opportunities.