



School Community  
Center/Joint Use  
Facilities

New Construction

**VALENTOUR ENGLISH  
BODNAR & HOWELL,  
REGISTERED ARCHITECTS**

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Pittsburgh, PA 15228  
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James D. Howell, AIA  
412/561-7117

**DESIGN TEAM**

James D. Howell, AIA,  
Principal, Project Architect

Thomas R. Chidlow, AIA,  
Steven Affeltranger, RA,  
Project Architects

Dodson Engineering, Inc.,  
Mechanical Engineer

Hornfeck Engineering, Inc.,  
Electrical Engineer

Taylor Structural Engineers, Inc.,  
Structural Engineer

Pennoni Associates, Inc.,  
Civil Engineer,  
Landscape Architect

**OWNER/CLIENT**

St. Thomas More Church  
Bethel Park, PA

Father James Wehner, Pastor  
Fr. Kenneth White, former Pastor

Sheila Riley, Principal  
412/833-0031

Type of School and  
Grades Served:

Combined-level School, Pre-K-8

Capacity: 400 students

Size of Site: 13 acres

Area of Building:  
77,000 square feet, total  
(64,000 school)

Volume of Building:  
1.3 million cubic feet

Space per Student:  
160 square feet

Square Foot Cost: \$169, total

Cost of Construction: \$13 million

Contract Date: Sept. 2004

Completion Date: Aug. 2007

Percent of Completion: 100%

COMBINED-LEVEL SCHOOLS

# St. Thomas More Center for Family Life and Education

*Bethel Park, Pennsylvania*

Valentour English Bodnar & Howell, Registered Architects

The St. Thomas More Center for Family Life and Education was built at a time when parochial school enrollment was declining and diocese schools were closing or consolidating. The decision to build was risky, but it represented a commitment by the parish to the future of Catholic education.

"Build it and they will come" has proven to be true. Enrollment has increased dramatically, exceeding 95 percent of design capacity in just one year.

The center serves as a K-8 school and an activities center for the parish. Its unique shape and configuration derive from the visible vocabulary of the existing church. The defining geometry mimics the older structure at a smaller scale, allowing the complex to read as a single, coordinated entity.

While the multistory configuration was not an ideal solution, nesting the building into a hillside was a critical design decision that preserved level site areas for regulation-sized athletic fields. It also created an easterly orientation for the building that provides each classroom with an abundance of natural light and morning solar gain during the cooler school-year weather.

Each classroom is equipped with modern educational tools, including SMARTboards™, projectors, and multiple computer workstations.

The school's principal says, "I must have died and gone to Catholic school heaven." ■



NEW BUILDING WITH EXISTING CHURCH



SCHOOL FACADE



SCIENCE CLASSROOM

PHOTOS: VEBH ARCHITECTS