

Offer Legislators Breakfast and They Will Come

By Suzanne V. Loud, Eli Whitney

On Wednesday January 18, Eli Whitney was a hub of activity as more than thirty stakeholders gathered in the Heritage Dining Room to discuss the future of the school. In October of 2009, SVFT President Rick Tanasi was reviewing the bonding list and noticed that Whitney had been removed. As the SVFT leadership worked to research the “disappearance” of the \$98 million line item, instructors, students and administrators at Whitney quickly began a campaign to make the community aware of the situation.



Whitney DH Paul Angelucci seated with Senator Sharkie and TTAC member Rob Simmons

Built in 1956, Whitney has not undergone any renovations except asbestos abatement. The school has been on the bonding list since 2002, and anyone who visits the school can see that it is clearly in need of renovation.

The purpose of the Legislative Breakfast was to bring all interested parties together to introduce them to the learning community that is Eli Whitney, share the accomplishments of Whitney students (and they are many), and garner the support of our elected officials in order to proceed with the renovation. This renovation is crucial in that it will provide our student’s access to the twenty-first century skills that they need to compete in the global economy.



Whitney DH George Reichert makes presentation to legislators and guests

As attendees arrived, DTP Mentor students directed parking and welcomed them to Whitney. Once inside the building, each guest was escorted by a formally attired Skills U.S.A. student to the dining room. The Eli Whitney Culinary Arts Department designed a delicious breakfast that showcased the talents of our culinary students. Principal Stephen Anderson convened the breakfast, and in his opening remarks encouraged guests to

ask questions of the students seated at their tables. State Legislators and other dignitaries dined on fresh fruit with yogurt, Eggs Whitney Benedict, and crepes as they viewed a PowerPoint presentation designed by George Reichert,

Related Education Department Head. The slide show accentuated the positives of Whitney and integrated CAPT data comparing Eli Whitney to the New Haven Public High Schools. The discussion at each of the tables involved all of the stakeholders: legislators, students, instructors, administrators, union leaders and State Board of Education representation. SVFT President Rick Tanasi addressed the group with closing remarks that explained just how important the renovation of Eli Whitney is to the Greater New Haven Community. After Mr. Tanasi's summary, Principal Anderson facilitated an open question-and-answer period that took the form of a positive dialogue about different ways to help Eli Whitney get the renovation it is due. The Legislative Breakfast clearly demonstrated the dedication of the Eli Whitney staff and their willingness to campaign to move their school forward to its rightful place in the CTHSS.