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**NEWS RELEASE**

February 16, 2010

## **BOARD OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES SCHOOL AMALGAMATION**

The Sunshine Coast Board of Education announced at a special board meeting on Tuesday, February 16, 2010 that students and staff at Sechelt Elementary School will, effective September 2010, be amalgamated with Kinnikinnick Elementary School. School Trustees voted unanimously on this decision to offset declining enrolment and tight budgets in the school district.

The Sechelt Elementary School site will remain open as a school so that the district can pursue with the province of BC a seismic upgrade and a central, new replacement school in the heart of Sechelt. The “Neighbourhoods of Learning” program integrates the community use of school sites. StrongStart and the Sunshine Coast Alternative School will continue to occupy the Sechelt site in 2010-2011.

Davis Bay Elementary School will remain open. The Board of Education and senior staff will continue to evaluate the Davis Bay Elementary School enrolment configuration and consider its viability as a K-7 school.

The above decision is the result of a Board motion in April 2009 to examine the problem of declining enrolment in Sechelt elementary schools and an extensive consultation process that included a committee of representatives from all school communities, several public meetings and a great deal of public input to the board.

Following the Special Meeting on February 16, Board Chair Silas White stated, “It’s sad and heart-wrenching to all trustees to have to move our elementary students from such a valued and longtime site as Sechelt Elementary. The education of these students is at the forefront of this decision, and parents have recognized this in their input to the board. At the same time, the Board is excited about keeping our Sunshine

Coast Alternative School and StrongStart Centre at the site and also about pursuing a new school as a Neighbourhood of Learning. This is a long-term goal that was prioritized in much of the public feedback we received and a project we will work towards strenuously on our community's behalf. It is the best way to utilize and extend this valued and longtime school site into the future."

Deborah Palmer, Superintendent of Schools, stated, "That for staffing purposes, the staff of Sechelt and Kinnikinnick Elementary School will be amalgamated as one staff. The process to select the principal and configure the classes will be the next step. Parents and staff will be brought together to talk about the process and the interests of our students will be at the forefront," assured Mrs. Palmer. She added, "Finances, administration and resources for all elementary schools will be shared more efficiently in order to best, and most equitably, meet the needs of our individual students."

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