

# Sukhomlinsky News

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## Health is the foundation

*This month's extract from Pavlysh secondary school again focuses on the development of health, which provides a foundation for all other development. Sukhomlinsky points to the need to establish a balance between mental and physical work, and between work and rest. Sukhomlinsky particularly draws attention to the role of physical work outdoors in the fresh air. He also describes an approach to 'tempering' the organism (eg by going barefoot) that promoted increased resilience and resistance to disease.*

*The selection of stories this month has a focus on work, to match the other content.*

*Today machines and artificial intelligence are taking over more and more of the work that was previously performed by human beings. Sukhomlinsky reminds us that physical activity and time spent outdoors in natural surroundings are very important for our health, both physical and mental.*

*Is it possible that the increasing incidence of mental illness in our society is related to a reduction in outdoor activity, and a reduced sense of a connection with nature in consequence of our modern urban lifestyles? I hope you find the translations interesting.*

*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*

## Developing strong health

**In this issue we continue translating the chapter on student health from Pavlysh secondary school.**

Just as excessive intellectual work is inadmissible during term time, an absence of intellectual activity is inadmissible during holiday time. The intellectual work of our pupils during holiday time is connected with experimentation in nature—on the plots, in the collective farm fields, in the orchard, in the apiary, on the animal farm—with construction and modelling, operating machines and driving vehicles.

The more time is spent in intense physical and intellectual work in the open air, the more harmoniously all the organs function and develop, the healthier tiredness is, and the greater the restorative role of sleep. Students sleep with their windows open, and during summer only outside, on hay, near fields of grain crops, near hilly meadows. The phytoncides produced by grains and meadow grasses kill harmful microbes that cause respiratory infections. If a pupil has spent the whole summer breathing air saturated with the phytoncides of grains and pastures he will never catch colds (sore throats, bronchitis, inflammation of mucous membranes in the respiratory passages).

During summer our students generally holiday in their village, without travelling anywhere special. They bathe several times a day, in the lake or river, or taking a shower. Most students have a shower at home that they use from spring through to late autumn. The boys wear just singlets in summer, and until the age of twelve they wear shorts. From preschool through to the age of thirteen or fourteen the children go barefoot from spring to autumn in any weather. Conditioning the feet in this way is an important way of developing the organism's defences against illness.

[Continued on the following page]

## Developing strong health (continued)

I have medical records for 980 children who, from the age of seven to fourteen, went barefoot all summer, fearing neither rain nor heat. Not one of them fell ill even once. Some of our children are not afraid of walking barefoot in the snow and walk outside for five to ten minutes daily in winter. They are distinguished by exceptional endurance.

Completing homework before school and freeing the second half of the day from intense intellectual work are decisive factors that are not only conducive to strengthening health, but also provide the opportunity for a rich spiritual life and for all-round development. They are the source of a priceless benefit without which a full human existence is impossible: free time.

However, freeing the second half of the day from intense intellectual work does not mean freeing it from any intellectual work at all, but rather providing students with the opportunity for a genuinely rich and diverse intellectual life. The education of intelligent, fully developed human beings is only possible when students have five to seven hours of free time at their disposal each day, to use as they choose, according to their own interests. Without this any discussion of all-round development, of developing talents, abilities and a vocation, will remain empty sounds.

We do not allow our students to sit pouring over their textbooks after several hours of intense work in classrooms, because this exhausts the brain, dulls intellectual abilities and undermines the will to study. After classes our students are engaged in creative work in clubs and societies, according to their interests and choices, participating in games, excursions, walks, hikes, reading fiction and popular scientific lit-

erature (again according to their own choice), and engaging in artistic pursuits. Moreover, no less than 90% of this time is spent outdoors in the fresh air.

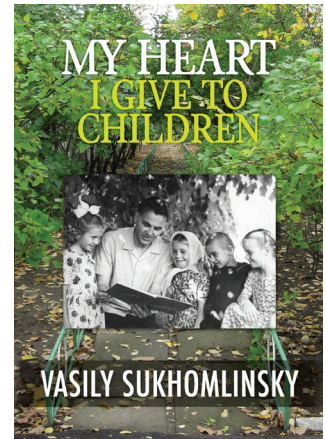
Students do not do homework in after-school care either. They do it early in the mornings. After-school care assists families, but it does not take their place. Indeed, nothing can take the place of a family. An education in which children are deprived of constant, daily, meaningful communication with their parents is an abnormal, deformed education, just as the life of parents is abnormal and deformed without constant care for their children.

Having observed the physical and intellectual development of many children over the years, we have come to the conclusion that an adult's health depends to a great extent on the way in which a healthy diet is combined with daily routines during childhood, adolescence and youth. I emphasise: the combination of a complete, healthy diet with work, rest (sleep), fresh air, and the constant, rational, tempering of the organism. Diet must not only be adequate in calories, but rich in easily digested foods (milk, butter, sugar) and dietary elements that play an important role in the growth of the organism (especially proteins and vitamins). Our experience suggest that the calorific intake should be 25%-30% greater than the norms generally recommended in children's institutions. These norms do not take into account the fact that children should spend most of their time in outdoor activities, and that this increases their metabolic rate.

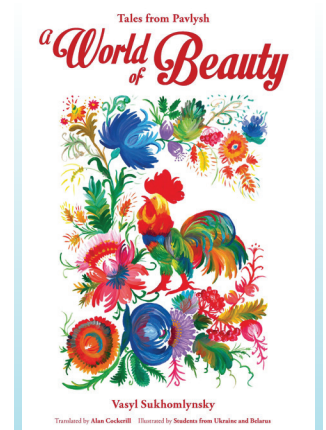
Especially important in a child's diet are milk and sugar, including the sugar from fruits. In the morning, after waking, children drink a glass of cold milk and eat some bread and butter. We ensure this

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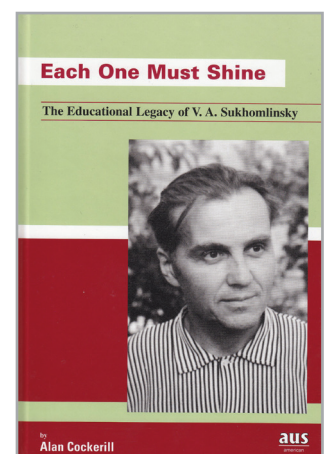
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happens through constant discussions with parents. Every family has written guidelines regarding a normal, healthy diet, that take into account their child's individual needs. The parents prepare special foods for their children, including a supply of dried fruits to ensure a supply of fructose over the winter months.

After completing their homework, the children have a good breakfast before setting off for school. After two lessons, during a thirty-minute break, every child receives a glass of milk in the school dining room, and after school every child receives bread and butter with tea or milk (for those that require an enhanced diet). Children should never feel 'a hole in their stomach'. At home, after returning from school, the children have dinner. After dinner they go for a walk or do some work (not demanding excessive effort) in the fresh air.

Gymnastic exercises and swimming play an important role in strengthening health. Apart from exercises done at home upon waking, gymnastic exercises are conducted at school before lessons with the specific aim of developing good posture. Before the thirty-minute break the teachers conduct a minute of physical education, following a routine specific to each age group. There are several platforms for swimming set up at the lake near the school.

We do our best to ensure that observing healthy routines becomes a part of self-education, particularly as regards the alternation of work and rest, intellectual and physical work, and doing individual exercises upon waking. In discussing self-education with students, we draw attention to the moral significance of fully adhering to the requirements of a routine. The students develop the attitude that self-discipline is a moral virtue. This is facilitated by a number of rules that govern

work routines throughout the whole school community. For instance, all extracurricular activities must end at least an hour before sleep. We try to ensure that children spend the evenings with their families.

### **Work as a means of strengthening health**

Physical work plays just as important a role in the development of physical perfection as sport. Without healthy tiredness a person cannot fully experience the pleasure of rest.

There are many work procedures in which the harmonious, graceful, coordinated movements of the human body may be compared to gymnastic exercises. In their dynamics and the aesthetic expressiveness of their movements such work is on a par with gymnastics (cutting hay by hand, for example, or the laying of brick walls). Young people perform such physical work with great pleasure, especially in a group. Such work even has certain advantages over sport: it has more layers of significance that are expressed in various combinations of physical strength, mastery and skill. Our young men and women prepare for such work as if for a holiday. During the summer holidays our senior students spend several days cutting hay by hand. It is difficult to exaggerate the value and charm of this work in the fields, camping out and preparing food together. The students love the collective manual work of tree planting, grafting fruit trees, and covering grape vines for the winter. Every year our senior students take part in laying brick walls for structures around the school.

Having participated in such work throughout their time at our school, our students are distinguished by their attractive physical development, the harmonious proportions of their bodies, their plasticity of movement, and their ability to apply physical strength

in proportion to the demands of the task. A characteristic feature of their physical development is the combination of harmonious proportions, graceful posture and physical strength. They seek to express beauty in any physical work and strive for the aesthetic perfection of any work process.

When we speak of the joy of work, the source of that joy is first and foremost the beauty of that work, during which a person creates their own beauty.

From their very first days at our school our students do physical work: in the nature room, in workshops, or in our experimental horticultural plots. We are able to find work of appropriate difficulty even for our seven-year-olds: maintaining fruit trees and grape vines, growing seedlings, collecting seed from ornamental plants and fruit trees, selecting seed for grain and other industrial crops.

During the middle-school and senior years work outdoors can amount to two or three hours per day.

During the summer our Pioneers live for two or three weeks in a Pioneer camp, where work is combined with recreation (the children work for two or three hours per day). The children maintain defensive belts of forest that protect the banks of our water reservoirs from erosion. They work in the mornings and evenings, when the air is cool and fresh. They eat and sleep in the open air.

Our senior students spend at least three or four weeks living and working in the fields, in the fresh air. They gather and dry the hay and harvest grain crops.





## Stories

### The Festival of the First Bread

The joyful day of the First Bread Festival arrives.

It is a sunny August morning. We sit down to table. On the table is a large fancy white loaf. And in a bowl is some fragrant honey. Our table is set on the grass, next to an orchard. You can smell the apples and pears. Bees are flying above the bowl of honey. A little bee with golden wings settles on the edge of the bowl and touches the honey. Oh, how sweet it is, it's from our hive! The hives are here in the orchard. We can hear the bees buzzing...

We cut up the bread and share out the pieces. What delicious bread! Probably because we have put our work into it. We dug the soil and fertilized it. We sowed the wheat and watered it, and covered it with snow in the winter, so it would not be cold.

What delicious bread! It smells of spring winds and the hot summer sun. Bread is made of work and happiness.

### A precious ear of wheat

It was during the dark days of the Fascist invasion. The enemy were killing and torturing people, driving them into slave labour. They took their crops and their homes.

Before the war our agricultural scientists had developed a new variety of wheat. Each hectare yielded four tonnes. But the Fascists came and took the wheat. The old collective farmer, Grandpa Andrei's heart ached. He went to the field where the wheat had grown and found a single ear of wheat. He picked it up from the earth, wrapped it in his handkerchief and took it home. He put it in a chest so he could keep it until they were liberated from Fascist slavery.

For two years our people suffered under Fascist bondage. And then liberation came: the Red Army crushed the Fascists. Grandpa Andrei

got out his ear of the wonderful wheat, picked out the grains and sowed them. In autumn he harvested three handfuls. He sowed it again and harvested half a sack of wheat. He sowed it again and gave the collective farm ten sackfuls.

That is how grandpa Andrei saved the wonderful wheat.

### The right hand and the left hand

Weeds were growing among the carrots. Little Marina went to the vegetable garden to save the carrots from the weeds. She kept using her right hand to pull them up, but her left hand did not do anything. The right hand got tired, and asked the left hand:

"Why aren't you working? Look how hard I am working—all my muscles are aching—and you're doing nothing.

The left hand was ashamed. It began to work. Little Marina finished the work quickly.

### A granddaughter for the old cherry tree

A cherry tree grows in the garden. Not far from it Oleg noticed a slender little cherry sapling and asked his grandfather:

"Where did that tree come from?"

"It grew from a pip."

"So it's the daughter of the old cherry tree?"

"The daughter."

"And will the old cherry tree have a granddaughter?"

"It will, Oleg," answered grandpa. "If you look after the little cherry tree, wait for it to fruit, and plant a pip, the granddaughter of the old cherry tree will grow from it.

Oleg thought about it. In his eyes grandpa could see tenderness and concern.

"I will grow a granddaughter for the old cherry tree," said the boy.

