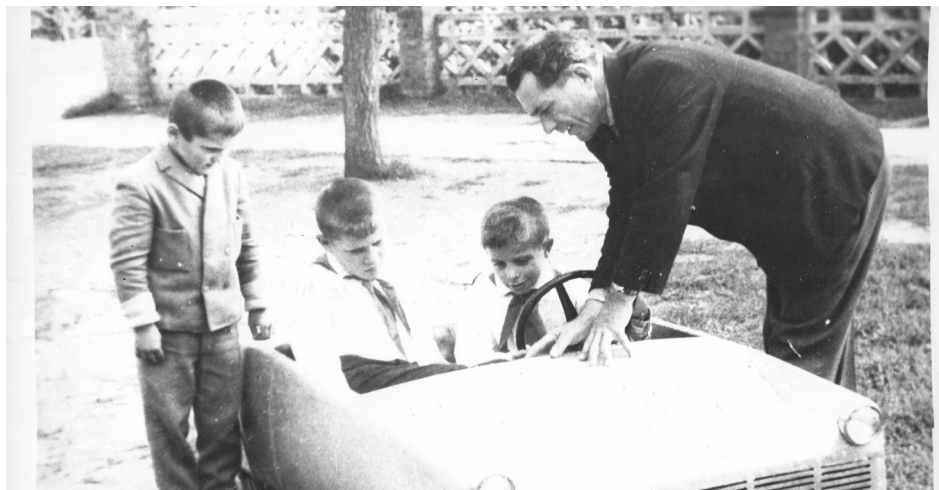


# Sukhomlinsky News

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## Characteristics of work education

### Work education

In this issue we continue our translation of extracts from the sixth chapter of *Pavlysh Secondary School*, which is on work education. Last month we presented 5 out of 12 principles that guided Sukhomlinsky's approach to work education. This month, we are presenting the remaining 7 principles.

#### Principles of work education (continued)

##### 6. Consistency and continuity of work.

We do not allow the completion of work assignments to be allocated to a particular time of the year, month or week. Only daily, constant work enriches one's spiritual life. Children only discover the creative nature of work activity when they are involved in long-term work that demands daily thought and care.

Our young orchardists raise fruit tree saplings over a period of two or three years. At the basis of this work are some interesting projects. By means of experimentation the students find out which approaches to grafting horticultural varieties to rootstock are most suitable for our locality, when is the best time to sow the seeds of fruit trees, which fertilisers give the best results, and so on. This is daily work in the full sense of the word: the students work not only in spring and summer, but also in autumn and winter (for example, trialling various methods for stratifying seed).

The work in our clubs for young plant breeders is just as constant. In this case the children select the hardiest plants and trial them in various conditions over a number of years.

##### 7. Children's work should have the characteristics of adult work.

Children's work should have as much as possible in common with adult work, in terms of both its social significance and the techniques and technology involved in its processes. The more similar children's work is to that of adults, the greater its educational impact.

[Continued on the following page]

Dear readers,

This month I am continuing to translate chapter six of 'Pavlysh Secondary School', presenting another seven principles that guided Sukhomlinsky's approach to work education.

In many respects, the work engaged in by children at Sukhomlinsky's school resembled adult work. It was of undoubted social significance, and included creating tree belts to prevent soil erosion, improving soil fertility, making tools and equipment for use both in Sukhomlinsky's school and in neighbouring schools, producing crops of food and flowers for local consumption, and so on.

Children were exposed to a great variety of work activities relevant to both agricultural and manufacturing industries, so they were well placed to make career choices based on actual work experience.

Efforts were made to relate work experience activities to academic studies. Wherever possible, work involved elements of research and experimentation: finding ways to improve agricultural yields, for example. In this way, work that might otherwise have been monotonous and tiring, was made purposeful and interesting.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

## Principles of work education (cont.)

Once we gave one group of seven-year-old children an amusing toy, whose operation depended on the use of electricity. At the same time, we gave another group of children the same age a miniature drilling machine, that also relied on electricity, not a toy, but a 'real' one, in the words of the children. It could be used for drilling holes in sheet metal to make models. What was the result? Although the toy was more interesting than the machine tool, the children soon tired of it. It was quite another matter with the machine tool. Once the children had learnt to drill holes, they wanted to use it as much as possible. From the point of view of adults, this work was also just a game, but for the children it was genuine, useful, necessary and interesting. The children took special delight in the fact that the machine tool was just like one they had seen in a factory workshop they had visited on an excursion.

We became convinced that we should not hold back children's development. They should use the same tools as adults as early as possible. Of course, the machines, mechanisms and equipment used by children must accord with the limitations imposed by age, school hygiene rules and safety requirements.

The thing that makes children's work most like adult work, that makes it serious and real from the point of view of children, is the use of internal combustion engines or electric motors. In our school there are several small engines that are used only by young school children. Special protection features exclude the possibility of accidents. Under the supervision of senior students, the little ones take great interest in learning to operate these engines, taking them apart and putting them together, and learning how to

maintain them. We also have low voltage generators and a variety of electrical equipment used in our work and in the maintenance of the school by students (e.g. pumps for watering flowers).

Experience has convinced us that the creation of special machines and equipment for children, which as far as possible embodies real technology and can be used for real work, is one of our most important educational tasks.

### **8. The creative nature of work, combining the efforts of hands and minds.**

One of the strongest motivating factors in physical work is the significance of the idea behind the work, the combining of the efforts of intellect and hands. The more significant the idea behind it, the greater the interest with which even the simplest work is performed. Mastering skills, research, experimentation, utilising scientific data in work, all of this is recognised and experienced by the child as an expression of moral dignity.

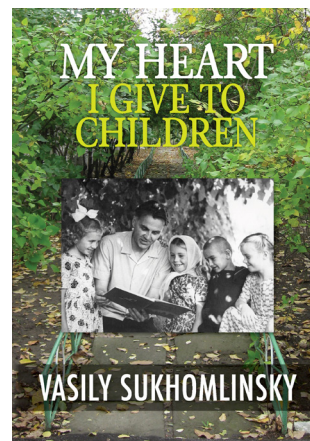
It is especially important to ensure the coordination of physical effort and intellect in agricultural work, where there are many monotonous work processes. We strive to ensure that any work connected with horticulture or animal husbandry has a creative goal behind it, the realisation of which will stimulate a child's intellectual powers, forcing them to think, to observe and to study natural phenomena. For example, in growing sugar beet there are many monotonous, uninteresting work processes. But even this work can become creative if a research goal is set. (Our children are researching ways of increasing the sugar content in the roots of the beet.)

### **9. Sequential development of work activity, abilities, and skills**

Everything that a child does in the early and middle years, we try

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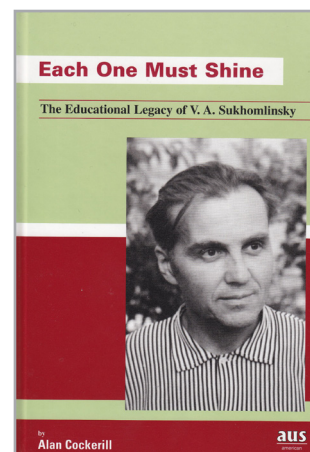
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to develop, deepen, and apply more generally as they mature.

It is very important that work during the years of adolescence should make it easier to acquire new skills in the senior years. We do not teach young people fifteen or sixteen years of age to drill holes in metal, for example, to prepare soil for sowing wheat, or to bud graft a fruit tree. They should have learnt these skills five years earlier, and the better they handle these skills, the greater their all-round development when they enter the senior years.

Early involvement in work activity allows us to ensure that by the age of ten or twelve children know how to work the soil and prepare it for sowing grains and industrial crops, to grow and harvest these crops, to grow fruit trees, to prepare fertilisers and apply them to the soil, to make infertile soil highly fertile, to operate an internal combustion engine, to operate lathes and drilling machines. At the age of fourteen or fifteen, all our boys and girls can drive a tractor and a car. This would be impossible if they had not learnt to operate an internal combustion engine at the age of ten or twelve. By the age of sixteen or seventeen, our young men and women not only know how to drive a tractor, they can use one to plough the ground, to sow seed and to apply fertiliser. Having this skill is not some kind of professional training, not an early choice of profession, but just a basic work requirement. Everyone in our country should be able to drive a tractor. In this way, thanks to continuity in the development of work skills by our students, by the time they enter the senior years they have a broad and varied range of abilities and skills.

### **10. The universal nature of productive work**

Whatever talents students manifest for intellectual or artistic activity, their participation in productive work during adolescence and youth is

compulsory. Physical work, especially that connected with unattractive or arduous processes, is universal in nature and all students participate in it. Everyone collectively gathers local manure and applies it to the soil, eliminates crop pests, prepares food for stock, plants woodland belts to protect fields from erosion, and builds sheds. Every student in grades one to four prepares 100-300 kilograms of local manure for use. In grades five to seven they prepare 300-600 kilograms, and in grades eight to ten, 600-1200 kilograms. Because of its collective nature, this simple work is carried out with great enthusiasm.

### **11. Work activity should be within children's powers**

In any work we allow a healthy tiredness, but never allow the exhaustion of children's physical and mental powers. The appropriateness of children's work is determined not only by the correspondence of physical demands to children's strength, but also by the judicious alternation of intellectual and physical work, and by offering a variety of types of work activity.

We attach particular significance to the alternation of agricultural work (horticulture and animal husbandry) with technical creativity (construction, modelling, metalwork). Thanks to this rotation, children can manage a workload that would be excessive and exhausting if it were monotonous.

Experience has also convinced us that children's abilities and potential are greatly enhanced, when their work does not consist of unrelated operations, but is part of a continuous project based on an interesting idea. Let me cite as evidence of this the following observation. Once, when we were preparing grapevines for winter, a group of twenty-eight eleven-year-old children, in the space of one and a half hours, managed to complete the comparatively difficult task of covering forty

grapevines. This brought the children a healthy tiredness, but also a moral satisfaction, as they had been looking after these grapevines for three years. It was a different story with another group, which was asked to cover the same number of 'other people's' grapevines. In an hour and a half, they only managed to complete half the work, and were so tired they could not continue working.

Any physical work carried out by children needs to be considered in close connection with their spiritual lives.

### **12. Integrating work with a multi-faceted spiritual life**

People do not live just for work. They only discover the joy of work when they have access to other joys, to things of cultural and spiritual value: literature, music, painting, sport, hikes through their local countryside. In refining human nature, in developing nobility of soul, these good things also help them to understand and experience the joy of creativity more deeply. The more sources of human culture the mind and heart are exposed to in adolescence and early youth, the more work ennobles a person. So, we try to ensure that in our community a diverse spiritual life continues uninterrupted. In summer in particular, when our pupils are hard at work in the fields for several weeks, we conduct literary and musical evenings at the school, evenings of science and technology, collective readings.

Success in work education depends on preparing a suitable material base, on the judicious selection of work activities for children, and on pedagogically sound forms and methods of educational work.





'Budenovka' Red Army cap.  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Budenovka>

## Stories

### Visiting Grandma Maria

Next to the school, lives Grandma Maria, old and all alone.

One day Pavel was walking home from school. He saw Grandma Maria getting water from the well. It was not easy for such an old woman, and her hands were shaking with the effort. Pavel went up to the old woman and said, 'Let me help you.'

The old lady said nothing, but in her eyes, Pavel could see gratitude. He drew the water, poured it into her bucket and carried it to her house.

It was the first time he had been inside Grandma Maria's house. On the wall, framed by a big colourful rug, hung the portrait of a Red Army soldier in a cap from the civil war, with a sabre. The red, five-pointed star on the army cap seemed to shine, it was so bright. The young soldier was smiling.

Pavel could not take his eyes off the portrait.

'Is that a Red Army soldier?' asked the boy in a whisper.

'Yes, that's a Red Army soldier,' quietly answered the Grandma Maria with a sigh.

Only then did Pavel notice that a Red Army cap was hanging on the wall above the rug. A real cap, as if the young hero had just taken it from his head and hung it above the portrait.

'Grandma, let me put the cap on my head... Just for a minute.'

'Put it on, my boy,' said the old lady, quietly, and her voice shook.

Pavel carefully took the cap from the wall, put it on his head, and stood silently before the portrait.

'Why are you crying, grandma?' asked Pavel, quietly. 'I will come tomorrow and bring some water for you... Just let me put on the cap once more...'

[Translator's note: The Red Army cap in this story was called a 'budenovka' and was an iconic cultural image from the time of the Russian civil war. Replicas were often worn by children.]

### Three apples

When Mariika turned seven, she planted an apple tree. Three years later the apple tree flowered, and three apples appeared.

Each day Mariika went into the garden to see how the apples were growing. With each day they grew bigger and juicier. Mariika could not wait for them to ripen. She had planted this apple tree for her mother and named it 'Mum's apple tree'. She dreamt of the day when the apples would ripen, and she would come into the garden, pick them, and take them to her mother.

At last the day arrived. The apples became rosy and aromatic. On a clear summer morning Mariika went into the garden, picked the apples, put them on a plate, and took them into the house. Her face was flushed with emotion.

'Mum, please accept this present from me,' said Mariika quietly. 'They're from your apple tree...'

The mother gave her daughter a hug and kissed her. She took the plate with the three rosy apples and placed it on the windowsill.

A day passed, then a second and a third. Each day Mariika reminded her mother, 'Mum, you should eat your apples...'

But her mother just smiled and said, 'Let them sit there a little longer...'

### My mother

Perhaps I dreamt this, or perhaps it happened during my early childhood.

I was sleeping, and dreamt of a sunlit meadow, and many, many butterflies... I felt my mother's warm gentle, tender hands touching me. I recognised them, my mother's hands. The warmth, gentleness and tenderness of a mother's hands is unique. Mum picked me up, held me close, and carried me somewhere, and it was as if I was floating. And I felt so much joy and pleasure... I wanted that moment to last forever.

I suppose our sense of a homeland begins with the gentleness and tenderness of a mother's hands.