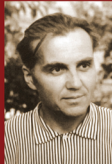


Sukhomlinsky News

OUR SCHOOL IN PAVLYSH
by Vasily Sukhomlinsky



Vasily Sukhomlinsky (1918-1970) was the principal of a combined primary and secondary school in the Ukrainian village of Pavlysh from 1948 until his death in 1970. Together with his dedicated staff, he created a holistic system of education that addressed multiple aspects of a child's development: physical, emotional, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and vocational. Sukhomlinsky wrote extensively about his experience, and his inspirational writing attracted thousands of visitors to his school. His works have been translated into over fifty languages and read by millions of educators.

Our School in Pavlysh describes the inspirational work carried out at Pavlysh Secondary School during the 1960s. For Sukhomlinsky's readership of teachers and school principals, the word 'Pavlysh' stood for creative thought, inspiration, and the hope of finding answers to troubling questions. Raising his school from the ashes of World War Two, Sukhomlinsky created a system of education that was deeply embedded in the natural environment and that fostered the qualities of curiosity, empathy and creativity. One of the thousands of visitors to Pavlysh, a school principal from Armenia, wrote:


'I have spent only one day in this remarkable school where so much is happening, but I have gained as much as I did in four years at the institute.'

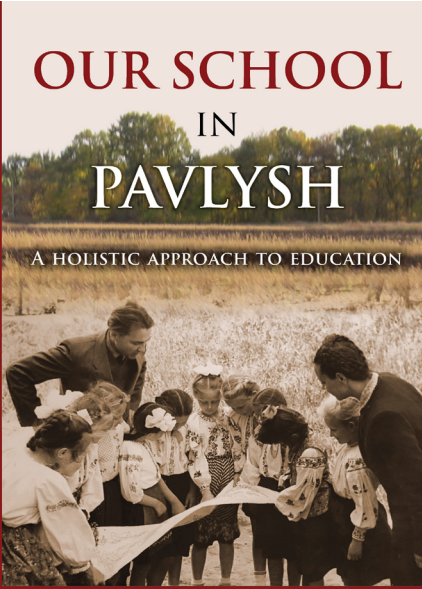
Students enrolling in Sukhomlinsky's school became part of a vibrant learning community in which teachers, parents, community members, and the students themselves all played a role in educating each other. Dozens of clubs operated after school, most attended by children of varying ages, and the older children played a significant role in educating younger children. These informal, extracurricular activities were extremely important in developing children's talents, building their self-esteem, and providing an experiential background for formal studies. In this environment, students became autonomous, lifelong learners.

Sukhomlinsky's approach can still offer inspiration to educators in the twenty-first century, as we face the challenges of the Anthropocene.

This new translation complements Alan Cockerill's earlier translation of Vasily Sukhomlinsky's *My Heart I Give to Children*.

EJR Publishing





**OUR SCHOOL
IN
PAVLYSH**

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION

VASILY SUKHOMLINSKY

EJR



You are invited!

Dear reader,

I hope you are keeping well.

*I would like to invite you to the official launch of my translation of Sukhomlinsky's Pavlysh Secondary School, which I am publishing under the title **Our School in Pavlysh: A Holistic Approach to Education**. The book launch will be held at the Avid Reader bookshop in Brisbane, Australia, on 20 December at 6.30 pm (Brisbane time). This is at 7.30 pm in some other states in Australia, and at 8.30 am in the UK. It is possible to attend via Zoom, as well as in person. There is no charge to attend, but registration is required. If you live in or around Brisbane, I would love to see you at the event, so we can catch up face to face. Alternatively, you can register to attend online. Details of the event and a registration link are included on this page.*

I realise the launch time will not suit people in North America, and I am planning a separate online event to launch my book there in mid-January. More details about the event will be included in next month's newsletter.

This month's newsletter features an abridged version of my foreword to the new translation, which outlines some of the main features of the book, and more stories translated from Ukrainian by Nataliya Bezsalova.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

BOOK LAUNCH DETAILS (and preordering information)

AVID READER BOOKSHOP

193 Boundary Street, West End QLD 4101 (07) 3846 3422

Book launch on 20 December at 6.30 pm (Brisbane time)

(7.30 pm NSW, Victoria, Tasmania; 8.30 am in UK)

To attend the launch, in person or online (via Zoom), register on the Avid Reader website:

<https://avidreader.com.au/events/alan-cockerill-our-school-in-pavlysh>

To order a copy of *Our School in Pavlysh*:

In Australia the new book can be ordered either from from the Really Good Bookshop:

<https://www.thereallygoodbookshop.com.au/product/13622>

or from the Avid Reader bookshop:

<https://avidreader.com.au/products/our-school-in-pavlysh>

In North America the book can be pre-ordered from Barnes and Noble at: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/our-school-in-pavlysh-vasily-sukhomlinsky/1140528199>

In the UK the book can be pre-ordered from Waterstones at:

<https://www.waterstones.com/book/our-school-in-pavlysh/vasily-sukhomlinsky/alan-cockerill/9780648580041>

You can also order the book through your local bookstore, and its online availability will increase over the coming weeks (release date 20/12/2021).

About Our School in Pavlysh

Vasily Sukhomlinsky (1918–1970) was the principal of a combined primary and secondary school in the Ukrainian village of Pavlysh from 1948 until his death in 1970. Together with his dedicated staff, he created a holistic system of education that addressed multiple aspects of a child's development: physical, emotional, moral, intellectual, aesthetic and vocational. Sukhomlinsky wrote extensively about his experience, and thousands of visitors flocked to his school. His works have been translated into over 50 languages and read by millions of educators.

The original title of this work was *Pavlyshskaya Srednyaya Shkola [Pavlysh Secondary School]*. It was first published in 1969, in a Russian language edition, and has never before been translated into English. It is a proud account of how Sukhomlinsky's school functioned to provide its students with a holistic education. Another work published around the same time, *My Heart I Give to Children*, shows us how Sukhomlinsky interacted with children as a teacher. *Pavlysh Secondary School* shows us how he ran his school as a principal and how staff, parents and students cooperated to create a vibrant learning community.

This translation has been done with English-speaking educators in mind: teachers, principals and parents. The social and environmental challenges we face today require a holistic approach to education: one that develops robust physical and mental health; fosters curiosity, empathy and creativity; and teaches young people to be custodians of our natural environment. Sukhomlinsky developed such an approach.

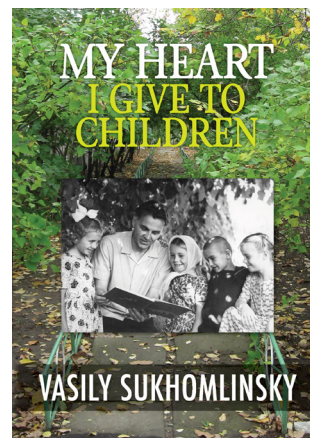
The book is divided into chapters that address various aspects of holistic education, including health and physical education, moral education, intellectual education, work education and aesthetic education. One of the remarkable things about the educational approach at Sukhomlinsky's school was how he and his staff managed to integrate all these aspects of education into a coherent whole. Whatever their subject, every teacher kept in mind the children's health, moral development, intellectual development, vocational development and aesthetic development. Every activity could be seen through the prism of any one of these priorities and address several of them simultaneously.

Another aspect of the school's holistic approach was the way it developed an extended learning community. Teachers, parents, community members and the students themselves all played a role in educating each other, providing a striking demonstration of the notion that 'it takes a village to raise a child'. Through heart-to-heart individual and group discussions, Sukhomlinsky created a sense of common purpose among his stable cohort of staff. The first chapter of this book describes how his staff developed common convictions and worked as a team. The school's spirit of teamwork extended to parents and families, who attended twice-monthly parenting sessions at the school, led by Sukhomlinsky and other senior teachers. The school also had an extensive program of extracurricular activities that Sukhomlinsky sometimes referred to as a 'second curriculum'. Dozens of extracurricular clubs and groups operated after school, offering activities as diverse as horticulture, agriculture, animal husbandry, carpentry, metal work, mechanics, modelling, electronics, puppetry, creative writing, local history and drama. Many of these groups involved children of varying ages, and the older children played a significant role in educating the younger children. These informal, extracurricular programs were extremely important in developing children's talents, building their self-esteem and providing an experiential background for formal studies.

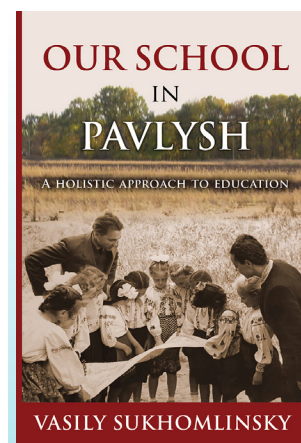
A third aspect of Sukhomlinsky's holistic approach was utilising the school environment as a potent educational tool, as detailed in the second chapter of this book. Vegetation was chosen to improve the air quality in the school grounds and create an environment of great beauty. The grounds were

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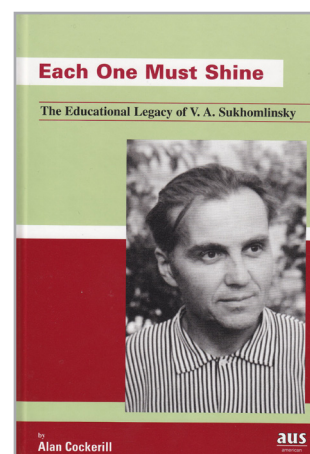
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divided into various areas that allowed smaller groups of children to play quietly without being unduly agitated by the bustle and noise of large crowds. This contributed to the children's psychological equilibrium. The children themselves were heavily involved in creating and maintaining the beauty of their environment and the facilities to support that supported the school's various programs. The classrooms and corridors were decorated with many displays that stimulated thought and reflection.

Sukhomlinsky encouraged students to become autonomous, lifelong learners. The extracurricular program was an essential part of this approach. One of Sukhomlinsky's priorities was that both staff and students should have sufficient free time to pursue their own interests and read books that took them beyond the curriculum they had to master. He encouraged students to think independently and form their own convictions.

Sukhomlinsky prepared this book for publication at a very difficult time in his life. In 1967, he had been subjected to sustained attacks in the press by ideologues who accused him of 'abstract humanism' and not adhering to communist ideology. He had great difficulty securing the 1969 Russian language publication of *My Heart I Give to Children* and only did so by first securing its 1968 publication in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). It is no surprise, then, to find that *Pavlysh Secondary School* contains numerous references to the Communist Party, communist ideology and canonical representatives of Soviet education such as Lunacharsky, Krupskaya, Shatsky and Makarenko. As is clear from Olga Sukhomlynska's study of the manuscripts and publishing history of *My Heart I Give to Children*, Sukhomlinsky was obliged to make frequent references to communist ideology to get his work published.

Some of these ideological references have been removed from this translation due to their irrelevance to the intended readership of English-speaking educators. I have deleted references to pronouncements at Communist Party conferences and to canonical representatives of Soviet education when they clearly serve no purpose other than to appease his Soviet editors. I have cut a section on 'social orientation' from the chapter on moral education, as its terms of reference were so foreign to Western educators. I have also cut a section on 'atheistic education' from the chapter on intellectual education. This section was interesting in its own way, as it called for tolerance and tact when dealing with parents who had religious beliefs, but the discussion did not seem relevant to educators in pluralistic societies.

However, I have not deleted references to communist ideals, as these were part of Sukhomlinsky's genuine faith and motivation. He fervently believed in educating young people to be unselfish and committed to the welfare of all, and to have respect for shared public property. He wanted young people to find wealth in

their appreciation of the beauty in nature, in works of art and literature and human relationships, rather than the accumulation of money or property. For example, in his chapter on moral education, Sukhomlinsky describes how he and his students laboured to create a communal grape plantation:

Many people think we are strange, obsessed, and ask us cynically what we gain from our efforts, what benefit accrues to us. These questions do not so much offend us as concern us. Those who see everything only from the point of view of personal gain are not yet ready for the collective work of which we dream. We try to convince such people of their error.

What are we making such an effort for? For people's happiness. For us, communism means happiness and joy for all people. We are making such an effort because we do not want each person to drag happiness into their own little corner, to surround it with a high fence and guard it with chained dogs, but to create it together with others, to seek it among their comrades and find it in common work.

Such ideals may be foreign in our own competitive and individualistic societies, but exposure to them may provoke reflection. Similar ideals motivated the first Christians and are inherent in many spiritual traditions.

Pavlysh Secondary School was one of a number of works that Sukhomlinsky wrote during the final three years of his life, knowing he did not have long to live. He had been severely wounded during the war and still carried shrapnel fragments in his chest that had travelled to his heart. He had a severe heart condition that had undoubtedly been aggravated by overwork and the stress he endured due to the hostile press campaign against him. By 1967 he knew he would not be alive for much longer and hastened to record as much of his experience as possible. The last three years of Sukhomlinsky's life were astonishingly productive, as he wrote his most mature and enduring works. These include *My Heart I Give to Children*, *The Birth of a Citizen*, *Letters to My Son*, *Pavlysh Secondary School*, *100 Pieces of Advice for School Teachers*, *The Methodology for Educating a School Community* and *Parental Pedagogy*. He wrote in the early morning hours before school, during holidays and in his hospital bed. Many of these works were only published posthumously.

I hope readers will find both inspiration and food for thought in this translation. If school principals were to read only the short chapter on health and physical education and implement some of its key ideas, I believe much good would come of it. Sukhomlinsky's approach to teacher mentoring and professional development, described in chapter one, foreshadows some of the most progressive modern practices. Studies have shown that schools that prioritise student wellbeing and inculcate positive values also perform well academically, and Sukhomlinsky's work demonstrates this. Sukhomlinsky's books offer a window into the experience of an outstanding educator and invite us to reflect on our own practices.



Stories

A pond shrouded in mist

We come to the pond at dawn, but we cannot see the water at all. We just hear the lap of its waves. Perhaps it is not a pond at all, but the boundless sea? Perhaps that is not a willow over there, but a mysterious ship exploring the wide ocean, its crew seeking to discover new lands?

We listen closely to the lapping of the waves. Somewhere in the mist, the sun rises. Now the white wall of mist begins to disperse. Something appears in its depths—something wonderful and mysterious, as if from a fairy tale. A high, stony mountain, and on it a crystal palace. Who lives there? If only the fog would disperse more quickly, so we could see the boundless sea and the fairy tale palace.

A light breeze blows the white clouds of mist to the shore. The fairytale palace shimmers and grows smaller. Its high towers turn into a green wall of reeds, among which ducks are swimming. It was their splashing that we took for the sound of waves lapping at the hull of a ship.

Why did grandpa chuckle?

An old sycamore tree grew beside the yard. Mykola asked his father how old the tree was. His father answered, 'I don't know, it seemed this old when I was a little boy.'

So Mykola asked his grandfather how old the sycamore tree was. His grandfather answered, 'I don't know, it seemed this old when I was a little boy.'

Every spring, buds sprouted on the tree's branches, and it was covered in green leaves that whispered in the breeze. But one spring, the buds did not sprout. The little birds that used to nest in its branches circled the tree, anxiously chirped, and flew away. The sycamore stood motionless and bare.

Mykola's father said to his grandfather, 'I suppose we need to cut it down. It has died.'

'Let's wait until the next spring,' his grandfather replied.

The buds did not sprout next spring either. Mykola's father and grandfather took a big saw and cut the tree down. The mighty sycamore fell to the ground.

The spring ended and summer began. One day, Mykola came to the stump of the tree and froze in awe: strong new green shoots with big leaves were growing from the old tree's roots. Mykola rushed to tell his grandfather about the green shoots. His grandfather came to look at the stump and chuckled.

Mykola wanted to know so badly why his grandpa chuckled.

Lily of the valley

In the morning, Petryk went into the garden and saw a lily of the valley. The boy gazed at it for a long time, enchanted by its beauty.

'I'll pick it and put it in a vase on the table,' thought Petryk. 'It will look beautiful inside.'

He reached out to pick the flower but was suddenly struck by an image of what the garden would look like without it. He covered the flower with his hands, and instantly the garden turned sad and unwelcoming, the green leaves were wrapped in shadow, and the birds stopped singing. Petryk took his hands away from the flower, and straight away the green leaves started whispering joyfully and the birds began singing.

'I did not realise how wonderful you are!' thought Petryk. 'How could I pick you and take you inside?'

When birds return

When I look back on my childhood I think of a warm, sunny day. The melting snows fill the air with the sound of running water and mist rises from the earth. Some patches of white snow remain, but a V-shaped flock of migratory birds can be seen crossing the blue sky.

'That is geese returning from warmer lands,' my mother explains. 'They are bringing the spring on their wings.'

I am amazed. Where is the spring, and how could they carry it on their wings?

Why the magpie has white sides

Magpie came to old Crow the Tailor and said, 'Sew me some new clothes, as beautiful as can be.'

Crow took his big scissors and cut the clothes from dark grey fabric.

'I want you to add some white fabric, so that I have white on each side.'

Crow sewed a dark grey garment with white sides. Ever since, Magpie has bragged about her clothes, and we have called her *soroka-biloboka*—Magpie-Whitesides.