

Sukhomlinsky News

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Welcome to new subscribers!

If this is your first newsletter, you may be interested to know that previous issues can be downloaded from the following website:

<http://theholisticeducator.com/sukhomlinsky/newsletter/>. Just

scroll down the page and click on the links.

In this issue we are continuing our translation of Sukhomlinsky's One Hundred Pieces of Advice for Teachers. This month's extract combines the sixth and seventh chapters, and asks 'Where do we find the time?'

As usual, we have translated some of Sukhomlinsky's miniature stories for children.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

A World of Beauty available in Russian and Ukrainian

EJR Language Service Pty. Ltd. has just published Russian and Ukrainian language editions of *Tales from Pavlysh: A World of Beauty*. These publications were previously available only as pdf files, but now they can be ordered as books from Amazon, after being published through Createspace.

Createspace is Amazon's print-on-demand service for self-publishers. This interface makes it possible to print as little a single copy of a book as it is needed. Ingram Spark has a similar service with an even wider distribution network, which we are using for the distribution of *My Heart I Give to Children*.

The Ukrainian language edition of *A World of Beauty* is available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Svit-Krasy-Kazki-Pavlysha-Ukrainian/dp/1539563251/>.

The Russian language edition of *A World of Beauty* is available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Mir-krasoty-Pavlyshskie-skazki-Russian/dp/1539558428/>.

The use of Createspace and Ingram Spark to distribute translations of Sukhomlinsky's works through major online retailers like Amazon and the Book Depository has largely removed the necessity for us to maintain our own online bookstore at <https://holistic-education-books.com>. It is anticipated that we will close this online store by the end of 2016.

Alan Cockerill
Brisbane, Australia



Where do I find the time?

The sixth and seventh chapters in Sukhomlinsky's collection of advice for young teachers address the issue of a shortage of time.

6. How do I find the time? There are only 24 hours in a day.

I have taken the words in my heading straight from the letter of a teacher from Krasnoyarsk. It is true. There is not enough time. This is the scourge of educational work. It not only affects our school work, but even our family lives. Teachers are human beings like everyone else, and need time for their families, for the upbringing of their own children. I have precise data showing that many graduates from high school avoid teacher training courses because they believe educators do not have any free time, in spite of their long holidays. I have some other interesting data: 500 teachers, whose children had embarked on tertiary education, were asked: 'In which tertiary institutions and in which faculties are your children studying?' Only fourteen answered 'at a pedagogical institute' or 'at a university, training to be a teacher'. Then they were asked: 'Why did your child not want to become a teacher?' 486 people responded: 'Because he/she sees how difficult our work is. We do not have a moment's free time.'

Is it possible for teachers to work in such a way that they have free time? Sometimes this burning question is even expressed like that. In fact the situation has developed where a language or mathematics teacher, in addition to having classes for three or four hours a day, has to prepare lessons and mark exercise books for five or six hours a day, and take on extracurricular work for another two hours or more. How can we solve the problem of time? This is one of those all-encompassing problems of school life, which, like the problem of students' intellectual development, depends literally on everything that happens at school.

The most important thing is the very style and character of educational work. One history teacher, who had been working in the school for thirty-three years, conducted an open lesson on the topic: 'The moral ideal of a young soviet person'. Those present included participants in a district seminar, and the district inspector. The lesson was conducted brilliantly. The visiting teachers and the inspector, who had intended to take notes during

the lesson, so as to offer a critique, completely forgot about their notepads. They sat with bated breath and listened with great interest, as did the students. After the lesson a teacher from a neighbouring school said, 'You certainly teach with heart and soul. Every word had a lot of thought behind it. How long did you spend preparing for that lesson? It must have taken some hours.'

'I have been preparing for that lesson all my life,' answered the teacher. 'And I could say that of every lesson. But the time I actually spent preparing for that particular topic, my actual 'planning time', was about fifteen minutes.'

This lesson throws light on one of the secrets of teaching proficiency. In our district I know about thirty teachers like that history teacher. They do not complain about the lack of free time. Each of them would say, about each of their lessons, that they had prepared for it all of their lives.

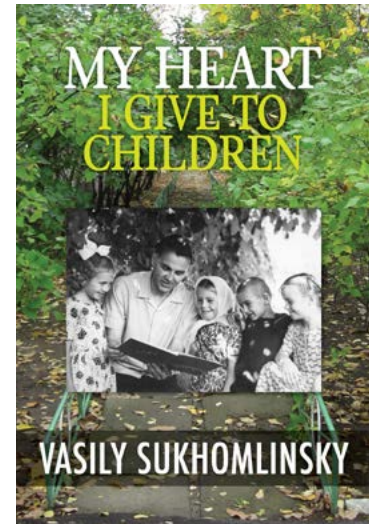
What form does this preparation take? It is reading: a constant, daily friendship with books; the unceasing flow of a murmuring stream that feeds a river of thought; reading not for tomorrow's lesson, but to satisfy an inner need, a thirst for knowledge. If you want more free time, and for your preparation time to be more than a boring session with the text book, read scholarly literature. For you the text book should be just the alphabet, a mere drop in the ocean of your knowledge about the subject you are teaching. Then you will not need several hours to prepare for lessons.

The high level of proficiency of the best teachers is a result of constant reading that feeds the ocean of their knowledge. If the knowledge of beginning teachers is ten times more than they are required to pass on to their students, then by the time they have been teaching for fifteen or twenty years that ratio has increased to 20:1, 30:1 or 50:1, thanks to the reading they do. With each year the knowledge in the text book represents a smaller and smaller drop in the ocean of their knowledge. We are speaking here not only of a quantitative growth in the teacher's theoretical knowledge. Quantity is transformed into quality. The broader the teacher's background knowledge, the more they are able to develop the foundation of teaching

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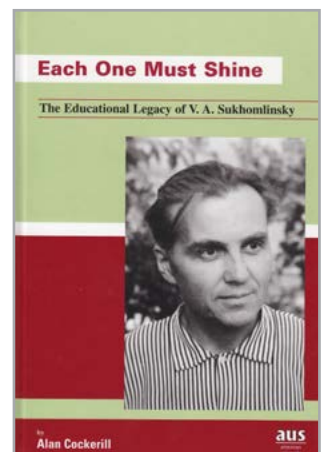
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proficiency: the ability to divide their attention while giving an exposition of material at a lesson. The teacher may be explaining trigonometric functions, for example, but his attention is focused not on those functions, but on the students. He is observing each student's work, and the difficulties they may be experiencing in understanding or memorising the material. He is not only teaching, but encouraging intellectual development in the process of instructing.

The problem of time is closely connected with a number of other elements of educational work. All may be viewed as streams that feed the river of a teacher's time for work and creativity. I would like to give some words of advice about how to keep these streams alive and flowing.

7. A teacher's time and the interdependence of the various stages of schooling

This piece of advice is addressed mainly to the teachers of primary school classes. It is upon your work in the primary school that the budget of time available to middle school and upper school teachers depends. If we carefully examine the process of instruction in the middle school and upper school, we find that the most merciless consumer of time is the constant and fruitless 'catching up of the tail'. No sooner has the teacher given an exposition of new material, than it turns out that a portion of the class has not grasped it. Instead of thinking about how to take the next steps on the path of knowledge, the teacher has to deal with those students who have fallen behind. (Sometimes the proportion of students who have fallen behind is so large that the teacher has to conduct supplementary lessons with almost the whole class.) This consumes much of the teacher's time both at school and at home.

Why is it that so much of a teacher's time is taken up with this seemingly unavoidable work of catching up so many students who have fallen behind?

I feel like giving the following advice to all primary school teachers. Remember, dear colleagues, that the budget of time for all teachers in the middle and upper school depends on you. You can give them the opportunity to be creative. Among

the many tasks facing the primary school, the most important is to teach children how to study. One of your main concerns should be to establish a balance between the volume of theoretical knowledge that children are required to master, and their practical skills and abilities.

Remember that falling behind in the middle and upper school is mainly due to an inability to study, to acquire knowledge. Of course you need to be concerned about the children's general level of development, but teach children first and foremost how to read and write well. Without the ability to read fluently, thoughtfully and expressively, understanding what is read, and to write fluently and without errors, there is no chance of successful study in the middle and upper classes, of study that does not call for the teacher to constantly 'catch up' those who have fallen behind. Teach all children in the primary school to read in such a way that they can think while reading, and read while thinking. The ability to read has to be brought to such a level of automaticity that perception and comprehension of the text significantly precede pronunciation aloud. The more significant this anticipation is, the more refined is the ability to think while reading, and this is an exceptionally important precondition for effective study and for intellectual development in general. I have been convinced a thousand times that successful study in the middle and upper school depends first and foremost on the ability to read thoughtfully: to think while reading and read while thinking. Therefore primary school teachers need to study how to develop this ability in every student. Thirty years of experience has convinced me that students' intellectual development depends on their ability to read well. A student who can think while reading will cope with any work more quickly and successfully than one who does not have the ability to read fluently (and this is not as simple as it appears at first glance). In the intellectual work of students who can read fluently there is no cramming. Their reading of the textbook or any other book is different to the reading of a student who cannot read and think simultaneously. When fluent readers have read something

they can perceive the subject as a whole and its component parts, with their interdependencies and interrelationships.

A student who can read and think simultaneously does not fall behind, and if students do not fall behind it is easy for teachers to work. Experience confirms that if reading has become a student's window on the world of knowledge, there is no need to conduct the supplementary lessons that take so much time. The teacher now has the opportunity to conduct individual discussions with students, and these discussions are not lengthy; just brief coaching sessions, giving advice on how to acquire knowledge independently, and avoid falling behind.

Successful study in the middle and upper school also depends on how fluently and thoughtfully a student has learned to write in the primary school, and how they develop this ability further. Along with reading, writing is a tool for acquiring knowledge. Success and the economical use of time depend on the condition of this tool. I advise teachers of primary classes: set a goal for every student to be able to write fluently and semi-automatically by the time they complete primary school. Only then will they be able to study successfully, removing the constant need to catch up those who have fallen behind. We should aim for students to write while thinking, so that the writing of letters, syllables and words is not the focus of their attention. Set yourselves a more concrete goal. Tell the students about something, and have them write down their own thoughts while they are listening to you and thinking about what you are saying. Children should start practising this two years before they finish primary school. If you are able to achieve this goal I assure you: your students will never fall behind. Having the ability to acquire knowledge, they will spare the time and health of teachers in the middle and upper school.





Stories for Children

A blizzard

Our hut is on the edge of the village. One winter morning it began to snow, then the wind began to blow. The field was covered in a mist. It swirled in clouds like a white waterfall. Everywhere you looked there were waves of white, moving quickly and irresistibly.

I opened the door and looked outside. Suddenly I saw a little grey bird flying towards a haystack close by in the field. It was as if it was not flying of its own accord, but carried on a white wave. The little bird fell to the ground near the haystack. What should I do? The snow would soon cover the bird and it would freeze to death.

I put on my sheepskin coat and walked to the haystack. I found the bird, already half covered in snow. I lifted the little bird, hid it under my shirt and brought it home. I put it on the table, and it was hardly breathing. It warmed up a little and raised its head. I saw that its wing was covered in blood. Some predator must have wounded it.

The bird stayed in our hut for several weeks. Its wing healed, I let it out, and it flew away. Then in the evening it came flying back and sat on my open ventilation window and chirped away. It was probably saying, 'Thank you. I love you, but I feel better flying free.'

The nightingale's nest

Our soldiers were driving the fascists from our native land. The enemy resisted cruelly. We were advancing through a forest. As we moved forward, fascist mines and shells exploded. Under a curly birch tree stood a young Soviet soldier, a youth of eighteen, Nikolai Polivanov from Siberia. He had rested his machine gun against the birch tree and was firing at the enemy. In the birch tree lived a little bird and its nest was shaking from the machine gun. The bird was hiding near its nest, and its beady little eyes kept moving from the soldier to her chicks, who were watching from the nest.

Somewhere nearby a mine exploded. Some shrapnel cut the little branch supporting the nest from the tree. The branch and nest fell in the soft leaves that had fallen the previous year. The little bird hovered, cheeping anxiously,

circling above her chicks, while the little things opened their beaks and cheeped back pitifully. The enemy was retreating, but the battle continued nearby, behind a hill. Nikolai Polivanov took his machine gun from the tree, and lent it against the trunk. He went over to the nest, and carefully picked up the branch. Separating the nest from the branch, he fastened it to another branch of the birch tree. He took some string from his kitbag, and tied the nest so it would not fall, and then covered the string, so the mother bird would not notice it.

'I know what those birds are like... If they notice a human has interfered with their nest they could abandon the chicks,' said Nikolai, smiling. When the soldier moved on with his machine gun towards the sound of battle, the little bird sat by the nest for a moment and then jumped into it. 'She hasn't abandoned them...' said the youth, looking back for a moment. In the evening, during a moment of peace, the soldier spoke of the birds in his native Siberia, and tenderness shone in his eyes.

The little elder branch

During the summer grandpa Ivan and his grandson Vanya were grazing the cows.

Vanya found a little elder branch, lying on the grass, and said to his grandpa, 'I can use it to chase the cows...'

Grandpa had a good look at the little branch and said, 'You can make something better than that with it.'

'What?' asked Vanya.

'Something that will brighten up your soul.'

And grandpa made a beautiful sounding folk pipe from the elder branch.

