

# Sukhomlinsky News

No. 26  
August 2017



## Learning inspires learning

*In this month's extract from Sukhomlinsky's Pavlysh Secondary School Sukhomlinsky writes about the parenting courses that were run at his school, and about the importance of teachers' own lifelong learning in inspiring a love of learning in their students.*

*I have also included in this newsletter three of Sukhomlinsky's little stories for children.*

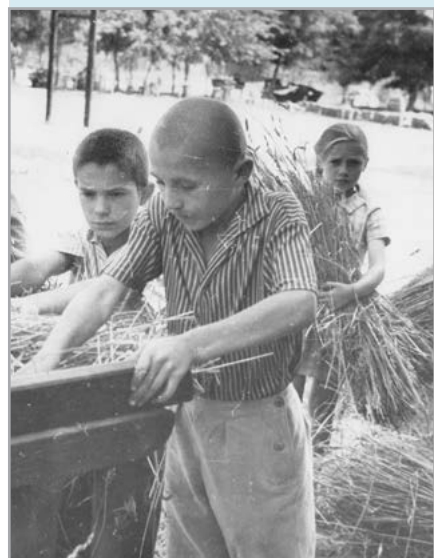
*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*

## Pedagogy for parents

**In the first chapter in Sukhomlinsky's *Pavlysh Secondary School* Sukhomlinsky touches on many aspects of his holistic educational system. One topic of considerable interest is the way the school worked so closely with parents, and provided educational programs to assist with parenting.**

In Pavlysh we study and know the spiritual life in each family, but this is only the beginning of an education which brings family and school together. It is my deep conviction, that pedagogy must be studied by everyone—both teachers and parents. And we try to impart to all parents a minimum of pedagogical knowledge. For this we have a school for parents, in which parents enroll two years before their children start school, and which they attend until their children complete secondary school. The course in psychology and pedagogy in our school for parents encompasses 250 hours of classes. (Incidentally, this is significantly more than any college or university course.) Those attending the school for parents are divided into five groups (according to the age of their children): 1) preschool (aged 5-7); 2) years I-II; 3) years III-IV; 4) years V-VII; 5) years VIII-X. [Note: At the time when this book was written, children enrolled in Soviet schools at the age of 7. Primary school encompassed years 1-4, and secondary school years 5-10, with primary and secondary sections often being housed on the same site, under a single principal.] [continued on next page]



## From Pavlysh Secondary School [cont.]

Each group attends classes twice a month. The main forms which classes take are lectures and discussions led by the principal, deputy principal and the most experienced teachers. Theoretical knowledge in psychology and pedagogy is closely correlated with practical education in the family.

The program covers all sections of the institute course, but we give special attention to developmental psychology, the psychology of personality, and the theories of physical, intellectual, moral and aesthetic education. We try to ensure that every mother and father relates the theoretical knowledge they acquire in our school for parents to the spiritual life of their own child. This requires great sensitivity and tact from us as teachers. We never 'expose a child's soul' or discuss sensitive, painful aspects of family relationships. Such issues may only be addressed in individual conversations.

We cannot imagine a complete education, with coordination between family and school, without our school for parents.

Another constant area of concern for our principal is the children's health. Successful education is impossible without giving constant attention to the strengthening of children's health. Sometimes the only reason a child is not succeeding is because they are sick or ailing.

In order to have the best possible understanding of factors affecting children's health I studied specialist medical literature, and with every month I became more convinced how important it is for educators to understand the inner physiological, psychological, developmental and sexual processes taking place in their students' organisms. A

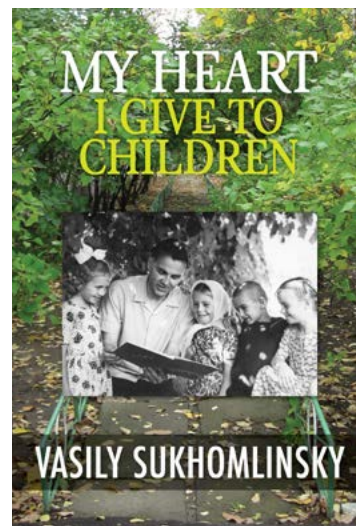
great deal depends on this understanding. Often children begin to fall behind in their studies because they are ailing, without being aware of it. An educator has no right to be ignorant of what is going on with the child, why they are unwell, and how their health is being reflected in their intellectual development.

In our country an atmosphere of love for knowledge, study and enlightenment is created by the very structure of our social life, and the education of a child's love for study depends to a great extent upon the teacher. The acquisition of knowledge should give a child joy, and an abundant spiritual life. The prime source, nourishing a child's love for knowledge, is the high level of teachers' intellectual culture, and first and foremost, of the school's principal. It is impossible to manage the instructional process in a school without a knowledge of all the subjects in the curriculum. From the very first days of work as a principal I set about the study of physics, mathematics, chemistry, geography, biology and history, and over the course of three years I independently studied all the school's textbooks and the basic methodological literature. I paid special attention to mathematics, solving all the problems in the textbooks, and many of those in the supplementary textbooks. In my notebooks I organized these problems into sections and topics, and each notebook is added to each year with new problems.

However, this was only the beginning. I made it a rule to follow the latest developments and achievements in the sciences that are included in the school curriculum. It is especially important to keep abreast of developments in mathematics, physics, biology, biochemistry and elec-

**REALLY GOOD  
BOOK SHOP**

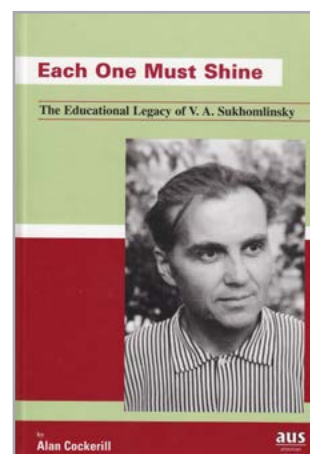
<http://www.thereallygoodbookshop.com.au/>



**AUS\$24.95**



**AUS\$14.95**



**AUS\$34.95**

tronics. In my 'laboratory', as I call my office, there are piles of exercise books (each exercise book being devoted to a science or a scientific problem), containing thousands of notes from scientific journals or cuttings from newspapers. My interests and passions are sometimes communicated directly to students, but mainly via the teachers.

For example I became very interested in research into biochemical processes taking place in the soil. Research in this area, both at home and abroad, is opening up particularly promising avenues for increasing crop yields. I had many interesting conversations about this research with teachers who loved agriculture and horticulture. The biology teacher and several of the primary school teachers became engrossed in this topic, and they presented the children with a fascinating picture of life in the soil, of the wonderful microorganisms that help to create plant nutrients. The children became enthused, and began to conduct experiments in the nature room, the green laboratory, the experimental plot and the greenhouse. For the principal this became yet another area of common interest with the students, another avenue for reaching the hearts of the most difficult children.

I still read the scientific literature on genetics, automation, electronics and astronomy with great interest. The physics teachers know that no new development will escape our attention. Each conversation with a physics teacher gives rise to a new initiative, and new plan. I am drawn to the workshops and laboratories where various clubs gather for young people interested in automation and radio electronics, technology and astronomy. With the same enthusiasm as the children, I assemble my equip-

ment and models as I set up a language laboratory. Together with the students I equip a meteorological station and a children's astronomical observatory, and together with them I excitedly view planets and galaxies, dreaming of distant worlds.

With excitement I look forward to the spring awakening of the soil, the movement of sap in the trees, the first leaves and flowers. In our school orchard and our experimental plot we conduct many experiments, cultivating dozens of varieties of crops and fruit trees. During spring, summer and autumn our young botanists conduct several excursions into the fields to collect plants. We select drought tolerant specimens of wheat and other grain crops for breeding purposes, collect soil samples, and look for new (possibly as yet unknown to science) types of useful microorganisms, capable of increasing soil fertility. During the winter months in our greenhouses and our lemonarium you can smell the sweet scent of flowers and see golden lemons ripening. These flowering nooks attract those who need to be drawn into the beauty of work.

I am a teacher of literature, and I confess to being in love with my subject. At the basis of my system of instruction lies the ability to read, understand, and relate emotionally to the primary source. At our school we consider a necessary precondition for success in the teaching of literature to be a love of language, an appreciation of the beauty of words. As a staff we constantly strive to refine our speech. We consider primitive, imprecise speech and poor diction to be signs of ignorance. 'Speak correctly. Every word has a precise meaning. An inability to choose the appropriate word is like drawing with a nail instead of with a sharpened pencil.' These words head a stand

in the staff room where we post various materials concerning the development of oral language (descriptions of model lessons, cuttings from newspapers).

I have a rich personal library, in which I have attempted to collect works of significant literary merit. I have strived to make this collection an exemplar of aesthetic culture. I lend my books to teachers, students and parents. Each encounter with such readers brings me great joy: we start chatting, I learn of others' interesting life experiences, and that widens my educational outlook.

I take great pleasure in tending to a grapevine, and in reading poetry about nature and about humankind. I write, not for publication, but for myself, and in order to teach my students how to choose words carefully. During my teaching career I have written over a thousand miniature compositions, each devoted to some natural phenomenon, to feelings and experiences.

I sometimes read my miniature compositions and poems to students. I take joy in sharing my thoughts and impressions of the surrounding world, of nature and people. I see that the children are particularly interested in those compositions and poems in which they recognise something that they have themselves experienced. When one of my compositions or poems touches their hearts, they also take up their pens and try to express their feelings. It seems to me that a sensitivity to language, and an urge to express in words the subtlest movements of the human soul, are an important source of genuine human refinement.







# Stories for Children

## The old dog

A man had a faithful friend—his dog. For many years the dog guarded his master's home.

The years passed, the dog grew old, and his eyesight began to fail. One bright summer day he did not recognise his own master. When his master returned from the field, he ran out from his kennel and barked at him as if he was a stranger. The master was surprised, and asked, 'So you don't recognise me anymore?'

The dog wagged his tail guiltily. He pressed his muzzle into his master's leg and nipped it tenderly. He was trying to say, 'Forgive me. I don't know how it happened that I did not recognise you.'

A few days later the master brought a young pup from somewhere. Next to the old dog's kennel he built a new kennel, and said to the pup, 'You can live here.'

The old dog asked his master, 'Why do you need another dog?'

'So you won't be bored by yourself,' said the master, and gently stroked the dog on the back. Then the master turned, sighed quietly, and walked away. The dog could not sigh, but it whimpered pitifully.

And the little pup rolled and played on the grass.

## The apple of his mother's eye

A mother had an only child, a son. She thought the world of him, and doted on her beloved son. She would sit him down to dinner, and then seat herself by the door, eating only what he left.

One day she cooked him fried carp in sour cream. Her son liked it so much he began to demand it every day.

'I'll have Carp... If there's no carp I won't bother eating...'

How could the mother go against the wishes of her beloved son?

Each day she went to the pond and set nets to catch carp. She kept going into the cold water until late autumn, caught a cold and became bedridden.

The mother was lying sick in bed, too weak to get up and drink some water. But her son just sat at the table silent and gloomy. Not only was there no carp, there was not even any boiled potato.

The mother groaned, and not from the illness, but with a mother's grief. She had raised a son who was big and strong, but unkind.

The mother asked her son, 'My son, what is most dear to you in life?'

The son was silent, because he had nothing to say. There was nothing in his life that was truly dear to his heart.

The mother could not bear it. Her heart was burning from grief and hurt.

## Skis and skates

In autumn grade three student Borya was given some skates by his father. His friend Zhenya was given some skis by his father. Borya thought to himself, 'What is better, skates or skis? Probably skis, because you can go anywhere on them, in the village and in the forest. You can only skate on the pond.' Borya said to Zhenya, 'Let's swap. I'll give you my skates, and you give me your skis.'

They swapped.

The frosts arrived, but there was still no snow. The pond froze over. Zhenya skated on the pond with his skates, but Borya sat at home with his skis.

Borya took the skis to his friend and said, 'Let's not swap after all. Give me back my skates, and you can take your skis back.'

Zhenya did not object. He just handed back the skates and took his skis.

That very day it started to snow. For days the soft snowflakes fell to the ground, covering the earth with a soft carpet. The ice on the pond was also covered over.

Zhenya went skiing, while Borya sat at home with his skates. A week passed, and then a second. Every day it snowed.

Borya took his skates and went to see Zhenya. 'Let's swap after all... You give me the skis and I'll give you the skates.'

'And what if the snow melts tomorrow?' asked Zhenya.