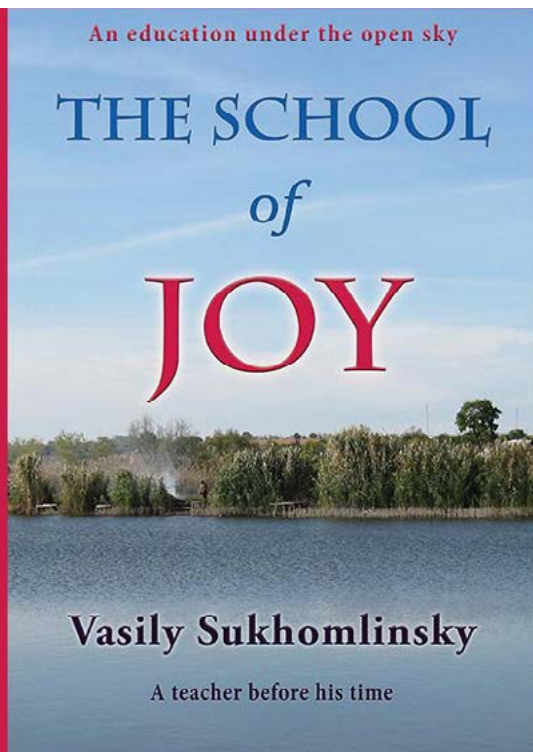


Sukhomlinsky News



Differentiation

*In this issue we are continuing the translation of Sukhomlinsky's **One Hundred Pieces of Advice for Teachers**. This month's extract is the fifth piece of advice, and discusses 'individualisation' of the program, or what we would today call differentiation.*

According to Sukhomlinsky, it is this differentiation that provides the foundation for mutual goodwill and trust between teacher and student.

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

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

A new publication, a special offer, and a radio interview

EJR Language Service Pty. Ltd. has published the first part of *My Heart I Give to Children* as a separate eBook, *The School of Joy*, free of charge, to encourage new readers to sample Sukhomlinsky's work. Newsletter subscribers are entitled to a free eBook edition of *My Heart I Give to Children*, and Alan Cockerill's ABC Radio interview with Richard Fidler is scheduled for 3 October.

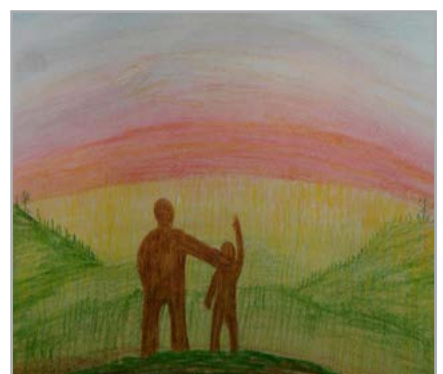
This newsletter is an attempt to bring Sukhomlinsky's legacy to the attention of English speaking educators. One way of doing that is to make resources freely available, and I have taken a decision to make the first part *My Heart I Give to Children* available as a separate publication, entitled *The School of Joy*. This can be downloaded free of charge for Kindle, or in ePub or pdf formats. It is available from Amazon and other major eBook retailers, or in pdf format at the following web page:

<http://theholisticeducator.com/joy-download/>.

I have also made the whole of *My Heart I Give to Children* available as an eBook to any subscriber to this newsletter. Those already subscribed to the newsletter can download it at: <http://theholisticeducator.com/sukhomlinsky/heart-download/>.

Just over a month ago I recorded an interview for the ABC radio program *Conversations with Richard Fidler*. It is scheduled to go to air on 612 ABC Brisbane on Monday 3 October at 11.00 am. It may possibly be on Radio National the following day at 12.00 noon. In the next newsletter I hope to provide a link to a podcast of the interview.

Alan Cockerill



Each student is an individual

The fifth chapter in Sukhomlinsky's collection of advice for young teachers is entitled 'There is no such thing as an abstract student'.

Why is it that even in grade one there are students who fall behind, and in grade two and three you sometimes come across students who are hopelessly behind, who a teacher has 'given up' on. It is because there is no individual approach to students in the most important area of school life: intellectual work.

Imagine that all the seven-year-old children commencing grade one were required to complete exactly the same physical work, carrying water for example. One is already exhausted after carrying five buckets, while another can manage twenty. If you force the weaker child to carry twenty buckets it will overstrain them. The next day they will not be able to do anything, and may end up in hospital. Children's capacity for intellectual work is just as varied. One understands, makes sense of things and remembers things easily, storing them in their long term memory. Another experiences intellectual work completely differently, taking in the material very slowly, and storing knowledge in their memory for only a short time; though it often happens that later on the slower student achieves more significant success in their studies and in their intellectual development than the one who found it easier to study at the beginning. There is no such thing as an abstract student to whom we can mechanically apply guidelines for instruction and education. There are no prerequisites for 'success in study' that are the same for all students. And the very concept of 'success in study' is relative: for one success in study means getting an 'A', while for another a 'C' is a major achievement. The ability to determine what each student is capable of at a given point in time, and work out how to develop their intellectual capabilities further, is an exceptionally important component of educational wisdom.

The preservation and development of each student's feelings of self-worth depends on what the teacher considers to be personal success in study for them. We should not demand the impossible of a child. Any program in any subject represents a certain area and level of knowledge, but not a living child. Different children have different

pathways to that knowledge. One child can independently read and solve a maths problem in grade one; another will not be able to do that until the end of grade two or even grade three. We need to determine by what route, with what delays and difficulties, each child can attain the required level, and how to concretely implement the program in the intellectual work of each student. The art and craft of instruction and education consists in developing the strengths and capabilities of every student, and giving them the joy of success in intellectual work. And this means there must be individualised instruction, both in the content of intellectual work (in the nature of the tasks set) and in its timing. An experienced teacher gives one student two, three or even four tasks to complete during a lesson, while another has only one. One is given a more complex task, while another is given a simpler one. One is completing a creative writing task, such as an essay, while another is working on the text of a work of literature.

With such an approach all students move forward, some more quickly, some more slowly. In the grades that children receive for their work they see their own labour, their effort. Study brings them moral satisfaction and the joy of discovery. In this case the mutual goodwill between teacher and student is combined with mutual trust. The student does not see the teacher just as a strict controller and the grade as a stick to punish him with. He will openly say to the teacher, 'I could do this, but I couldn't do that.' His conscience is very sensitive, and he is incapable of copying another's work or using a cheat-sheet. He wants to affirm his own worth.

Success in study, figuratively speaking, is a path leading to that corner of a child's heart, in which the desire to be good burns brightly. We must maintain that path and that fire.

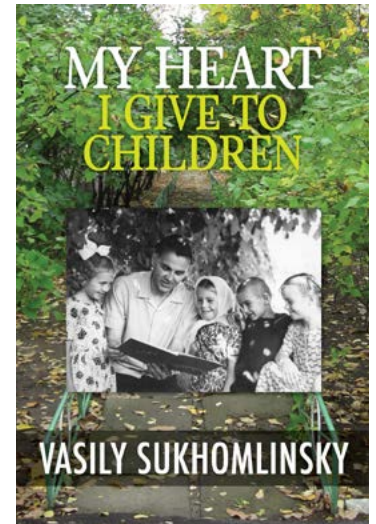
I have a friend, a wonderful teacher of mathematics, I.G. Tkachenko, at the Bogdanovka Secondary School in the Kirovograd region. This is what he says about how he prepares for lessons:

'I think about what each student will do. For each one I choose work that they can succeed at. If a student has not

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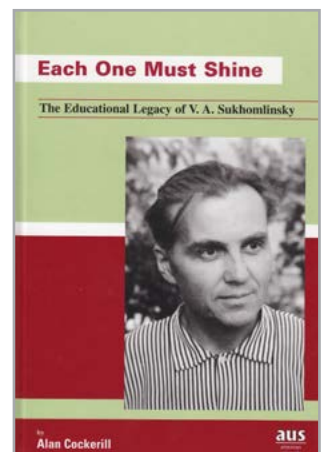
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taken at least a small step forward in mastering knowledge, the lesson is wasted. Work with no result—there could hardly be a more serious danger for student or teacher!

Consider the maths lessons of Pavlysh Secondary school teachers A.G. Arishchenko and M.A. Lysak. During problem solving (and problem solving takes up 90% of the time) their classes divide into several groups. In the first group are those children who are most advanced in their studies, who can easily solve any problem independently, and one or two of whom can solve problems orally without recourse to any notes: the teacher has not even finished reading out the problem and the student already has their hand up with the answer. For this group, apart from problems normally included in the program, there are problems that are beyond the program. We need to give these students work that is within their capabilities, but not easy, so they have to make some effort. Sometimes we also need to give them a problem that they cannot solve independently, but where the teacher only needs to give minor assistance, possibly just a hint.

A second group is made up of hard-working, conscientious students, for whom an excellent solution to the problem involves a degree of mental effort and inquiry in order to overcome difficulties. These are students of whom the teacher says, 'They get there through hard work and effort; they succeed because they are diligent and persistent.'

A third group consists of children who can solve problems of medium difficulty without assistance, but

who sometimes cannot solve more difficult problems. Assisting these students while they are working requires great educational skill.

A fourth group includes students who are slow to make sense of a problem and slow to solve it. They can complete two or three times less in a lesson than students in the second and third groups, and should not be rushed under any circumstances.

A fifth group is made up of individual students who cannot cope with a problem of even medium difficulty. The teacher selects special problems for them, always providing an opportunity for success, however insignificant.

These groups are not fixed and set in stone. Intellectual work that brings the joy of success always results in a further development of capabilities.

Examine the intellectual work of students during the lessons of a teacher who has managed to ensure that every one of his pupils tastes success. There is an atmosphere of mutual goodwill, about which we wrote earlier, an atmosphere of intellectual inspiration. Each student strives to achieve goals through their own efforts. You see in the children's eyes intense concentration of thought, a flash of joy (I've found the way!), or thoughtfulness (what is the best way to approach this problem?). It is a great pleasure for a teacher to work in such an atmosphere. Believe me, my dear colleague, however intense a teacher's work is at such a lesson, he has enough breathing space to maintain his energy for four or five lessons in a row.

For several years I taught mathematics in grades five through to seven, and

believe me, those lessons, alternating with lessons in literature and history, were really refreshing. Lessons during which each student experiences an individual, personal joy at success do not overstrain a teacher or wear them out. They do not have to be on tenterhooks. They not have to be constantly watching those lively, restless children, who, with nothing better to do, from time to time 'treat' the teacher to their pranks. During such lessons the energy of these children is channelled in the right direction. How diligently and with what concentration those pranksters and clowns work, if the teacher manages to 'harness' their energies to intellectual work that matches their capabilities, that promises and delivers success! In intense work their active souls are revealed and they become unrecognisable. All their attention is focused on how to complete the work as well as possible. I often experience annoyance and surprise when a teacher complains that a child is misbehaving during the lesson and getting up to mischief... That would not happen, dear friends, if you really thought about how to get each student to work!

Now we are touching on a critical issue in our work: how do we ensure that our work does not wear us out through constant stress on our nerves and heart, due to the fact that we constantly have to deal with either some 'crisis' or some 'innocent prank'. Such pranks may seem small and insignificant, but if they happen all the time, they prevent us from working and living normally.

The next piece of advice will examine how we find the time.





Stories for Children

A New Year tree for sparrows

It will be New Year in three days, but Vitya is sick in bed. His mother puts a fir tree by his bed, and hangs lots of toys, sweets and apples on it. In the evening lights shine on the tree.

The morning of New Year 's Eve arrives. Vitya looks out the window and sees three little sparrows. They are jumping from one spot to another, looking for food. Vitya feels sorry for the little birds.

'Mum,' says Vitya, 'Let's make a New Year tree for the sparrows.'

'How?' asks his mother in surprise.

'I'll show you how,' says Vitya. He pokes a little fir tree branch into a sweet box, and sprinkles grain and crumbs onto it.

His mother takes the little New Year tree and sets it up outside.

As soon as the little sparrows see it they fly over to the grain and have a feast, chirping joyfully.

It was Vitya's happiest New Year ever!

There is one more very delicate tree

Katyusha and her mother are watering apple trees in the orchard. There are ten trees and under each one they pour ten buckets of water, so that the trees will turn green, flower and bear fruit.

Katya has already finished grade one, and she can count well. According to her calculations, they have already poured ten buckets under this apple tree, but her mother pours an eleventh.

'How many buckets do we need to pour under each tree?' asks Katyusha.

'Ten,' answers her mother.

'Then why are you pouring an eleventh bucket under each tree?' asks Katya in surprise.

'Because there is one more very delicate tree,' says her mother with a smile. 'We need to water it too, so it will always be green.'

'What tree is that?'

'Our conscience.'

Why are you sitting so quietly?

Grandma Maria has an eight-year-old grandson named Sergei. The school year has ended, and Sergei is at home from morning to evening. He runs around outside chasing his dog Brovko, or Brovka chases him. Or he climbs up a tall tree, and grandma is worried he will fall. Or he runs along the road rolling a wheel, and grandma cannot sit quietly in the hut: there are cars out there!

Grandma Maria often complains, 'What a restless child you are, Sergei! You can't sit still!'

One day Sergei climbs up on the roof and cannot get down. The metal roof is very slippery... For a long time grandma walks around the house while Sergei sits by the chimney pipe. The neighbours come and get Sergei down.

Then something very strange happens to Sergei. He has breakfast, sits down on an old tree stump near the barn, and just sits there, looking at the ground. Grandma looks out the window, and he is just sitting there. She looks out ten minutes later and he is still sitting there. She looks out half an hour later, and he is still sitting motionlessly.

'What has happened to him,' worries Grandma Maria, and goes outside to see what is the matter. She goes up to Sergei and asks, 'Why are you just sitting there? You always run around jumping head over heels, not giving me a moment's rest. And now you're sitting on a tree stump, making me worried because you're not behaving like a child. What's the matter?'

'I'm watching how the ants live, grandma. It's so interesting!'

'Alright, Seryozha my love, just sit there then,' says grandma tenderly. 'There's another ant nest under the pear tree in the orchard.'

