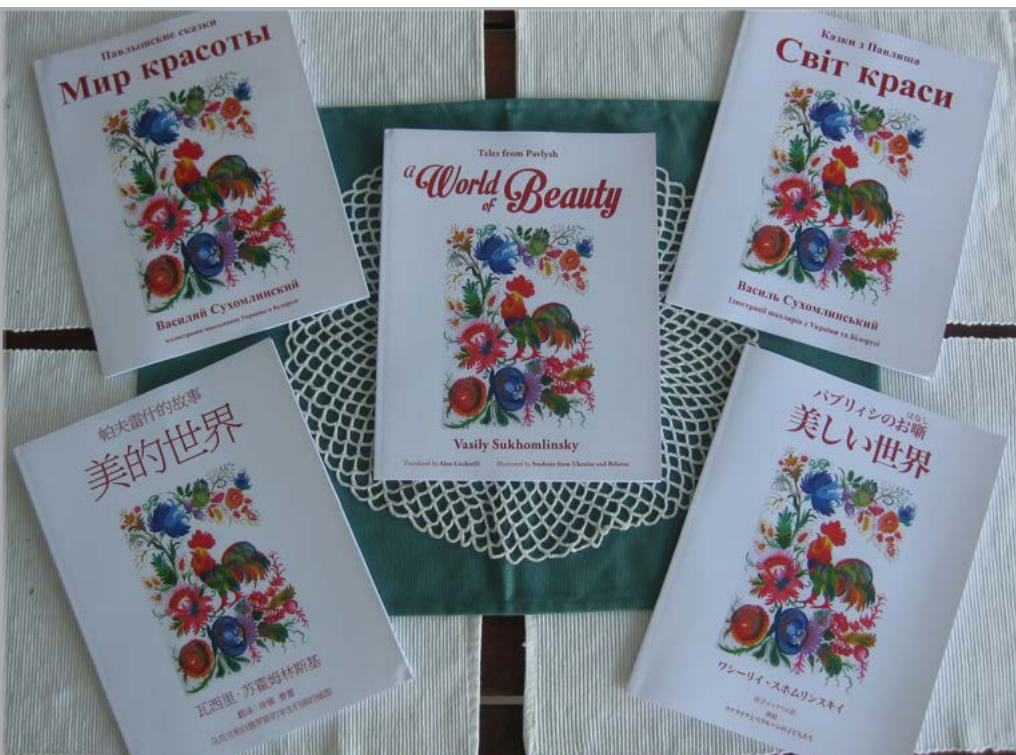


# Sukhomlinsky News

No. 23

May 2017



## Welcome to more new subscribers!

*I would like to give a warm welcome to all new subscribers! This is the 23rd issue of the newsletter, and all past newsletters are available for download at:*

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

*This month I am offering an extract from Sukhomlinsky's 1969 book 'Pavlysh Secondary School'. This book is an account of the school that Sukhomlinsky headed from 1948 to 1970. Next year I hope to translate the whole book, which outlines a holistic approach to education that addresses students physical, moral, aesthetic, intellectual and vocational development. The passage I have translated for this issue describes Sukhomlinsky's early experience working with children, and his philosophy of education. I have also included in this newsletter two of Sukhomlinsky's little stories for children.*

*Best wishes,*

*Alan Cockerill*

## A World of Beauty in 5 languages

I have recently published Japanese and Chinese language editions of *A World of Beauty*, our collection of nineteen of Sukhomlinsky's little tales for children, illustrated by children from Ukraine and Belarus. I have also republished the English, Russian and Ukrainian editions. This has been done using the Ingram Spark print-on-demand (POD) platform.

Last year I published English, Russian and Ukrainian editions of *A World of Beauty* using Amazon's Createspace POD platform. This made those publications readily available on Amazon at an affordable price, but I was not completely happy with the quality of the printing. This year the opportunity arose to use Ingram Spark's POD platform without their usual setup fees, and I decided to make all five language editions of *A World of Beauty* available via that platform. I believe the quality of the printing is a little better, and we also get to take advantage of Ingram's worldwide distribution network. For residents of Australia, the best option for purchasing the English language edition is still to purchase the offset printed edition from **The Really Good Bookshop** (see advertisement on page 2).

All five editions can be located on Amazon or The Book Depository by searching for 'Sukhomlinsky'. The foreign language titles in English transliteration are: '*Mir krasoty*' (Russian), '*Svit krasyy*' (Ukrainian), '*Ut-sukushii sekai*' (Japanese) and '*Meide shijie*' (Chinese).

# Reflections on School Leadership

(an extract from *Pavlysh Secondary School*)

To lead a school well means to understand the knowledge base of education. This must become the foundation for a knowledge-based approach to education and instruction, and for the organisation of the work of the school community – teachers and students. The principal needs to be a master of the education process, which encompasses both academic instruction and personal development, to have mastered the art of interacting with children, adolescents, and young men and women. Education, in the broad sense, is the continual spiritual enrichment and renewal, not only of those who are educated, but also of those who educate. Moreover this process is distinguished by its deeply individual nature. Any particular pedagogical principle, which is valid in one case, will be neutral in a second case and absurd in a third.

School principals will only be good and authoritative leaders of teachers and students, as long as they continue to perfect their skill as teachers and educators. A good school principal is first and foremost a good organizer, educator and authority on the curriculum, not only in relation to the students who attend their lessons, but also in relation to every student and teacher in the school.

The great responsibility placed on the principal's shoulders leads to a number of demands on their personal qualities, their morality, intellect and will power. The first and most important quality, without which a teacher cannot become a principal, just as not everyone can become a teacher, is a deep love for children, a natural inclination to spend time in the company of children, a deep humanity and ability to penetrate into the inner world of a child, to understand and feel each student's individuality.

This ability, which to a certain

extent is the result of a high level of pedagogical development, is determined first and foremost by a person's ability to apprehend the world through the heart – to understand and feel the joys and sorrows of others, to respond to their pleas for help.

You cannot learn to love children from any educational establishment or from any book. This capacity is developed during a person's participation in social living, through their interactions with other people. But, by its very nature, educational work – the daily interaction with children – deepens people's love for human beings and their faith in them. A vocation for educational work is developed in schools, in the process of that work.

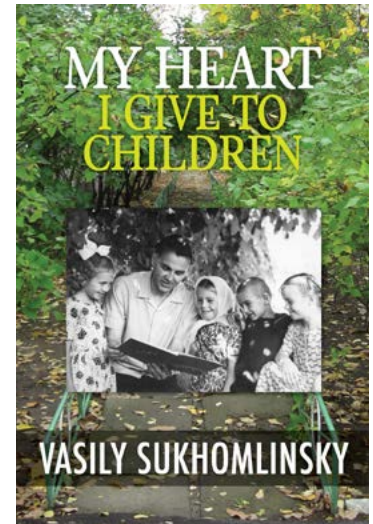
This book is based on personal experience. In it is reflected the outcome of the author's 33 years of educational work at Pavlysh School, including 26 years as its principal. Working in a school, educating children, has become my vocation. Before entering the pedagogical institute I worked for two years as a primary teacher and pioneer leader. When I entered college (I studied for three years by correspondence and one year internally) I was convinced that work in a school was the most interesting and absorbing work possible.

I remember with great warmth the Poltava Pedagogical Institute, from which I graduated, and the lecturers in pedagogy, literature and history. For them pedagogy was not some dry collection of findings, but a vibrant, living account of the art of education, of the methods for making an impression on people's feelings and consciousness. They taught me to love language. I will never forget how we wrote descriptions of an evening sunset and a January blizzard...

Having graduated from the fac-

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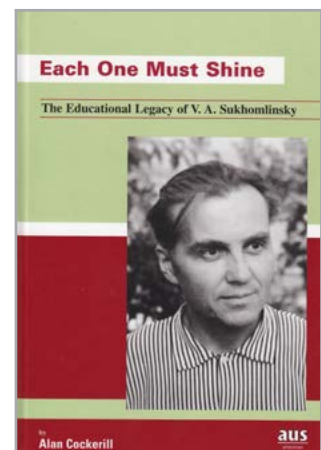
Tales from Pavlysh  
*a World of Beauty*



Vasily Sukhomlinsky

Translated by Alan Cockerill. Illustrated by Students from Ukraine and Belarus.

**AUS\$14.95**



**AUS\$34.95**



ulty of language and literature, it was with some trepidation that I crossed the threshold of a secondary school. While I taught senior high school students, I could not live without some contact with younger children. I was a leader of one of the pioneer brigades, assisted the senior pioneer leader and went with the children on hiking trips.

And now, when I reflect on the work of a teacher, I come to the conclusion that children are drawn to those who are drawn to them, who cannot live without them, who find pleasure and happiness in communicating with them. During the first years of my teaching work, of course, I did not think about this correlation. Children just gave me joy. As soon as the school year ended I set out on hikes with them, into the fields and forests, and to the river. I felt happy spending the night with the children under the bright southern stars, making porridge, telling the children stories, legends and fairy tales. That is probably why the children walked with such pleasure in the hot sun, carrying heavy rucksacks.

During the summertime, many young children were left without supervision (at that time there were no crèches and kindergartens in the village). I collected the little ones and played with them, and organised something like today's pioneer camps for them on the banks of a lake.

Some young adolescents wanted to go on a "sea voyage" in the summer—to sail in a boat across the lake to the river, and to land on some "uninhabited" island... I have only just realised that I put this idea in their heads, but at the time it seemed to me that they had come up with the idea themselves, independently of my tales. But we didn't have a boat, so throughout the school year I collected money, and in spring I bought two boats from the fishermen. The parents bought a third one, and our flotilla set sail. Perhaps some readers will think that

the author is presenting these facts as evidence of his extraordinary concern for children. No, I bought the boats because I wanted to give joy to the children, and the children's joy gave me more happiness than anything else. I was interested in each child: I wanted to find out what made them tick, what interested and excited them, what joys and sorrows they experienced. My circle of friends widened with each passing day. My friends and, as I later understood, my students, included children whom I did not teach in class.

As a teacher of language and literature, I was entrusted with the organisation of a literature circle. I was given a brochure with methodological guidelines, but from the very beginning things took a different direction to that suggested by the guidelines. I began to read the children my own poems. I was not trying to awaken the children's poetic talents, but somehow it happened that we created a group of young poets and lovers of literature.

On quiet spring evenings, and on clear sunny days, on Sundays and public holidays, we went into the fields, to the banks of a lake, to an oak grove, sat somewhere on the grass and composed verses and poetic descriptions of what we could see and hear, of what we were thinking about. We compiled collections of these verses and stories, which we called a literary journal.

Some of the children uncovered genuine poetic talents. I remember I was struck by the poems of Alyosha K., in which detailed pictures presented themselves to the mind's eye. Imagine my amazement when I learnt that Alyosha was getting failing grades in his native language, and did not want to participate in mathematics lessons... It seemed grotesquely absurd. The more I got to know Alyosha, the more I was convinced that no normal person should be a failure. In each child some ability manifested itself, and the

conviction grew in me that there is no such thing as a child without ability, or talentless or lazy children. I did not have a single failing student. I was surprised to hear that in some teachers' classes children were not learning their lessons, were getting unsatisfactory grades (twos) and repeating the year. It seemed to me then that the main things that should motivate a student to study are respect for the teacher, faith in their own ability, interest in learning and a thirst for knowledge.

I wanted to satisfy the various interests and aspirations of my students as fully as possible. In other words, I wanted it to be interesting for the children to live and to study.

In those years the nation was excited by the first long distance flights of Soviet pilots, by distant expeditions into the Arctic, by the construction of new cities in the Taiga. The children and I not only wrote poems about the heroes of these exploits, but also pretended to be explorers of new lands. On the outskirts of the town was a half-ruined, abandoned peasant house. We turned it into something like a ship's cabin, and called our imaginary ship the "Northern Robinson". Here we read books about famous explorers, and drew pictures of our imaginary discoveries.

I will never forget those autumn evenings, when the wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating on the glass windows—the "portholes" of our ship. We huddled around the fire, with bated breath, living through the amazing adventures of Amundsen and Miklouho-Maclay, struggling with them over the Arctic ice, or through tropical rainforests. In the winter we made igloos and ice-hummocks, and pretended to be members of the Chelyuskin expedition. [Note: In 1933 a Soviet expedition aboard the ship "Chelyuskin" attempted to sail from Murmansk to Vladivostok through the polar ice. They were trapped by the ice in February 1934 and rescued by Soviet pilots.]



## Stories for Children

### An oak tree in the way

People began to build a road between two large towns, from north to south. They wanted to make it wide and straight, strong and beautiful.

They began construction. They made a high earth embankment, with stone retaining walls, and surfaced it in asphalt. The road passed through meadows and steppes, and along the banks of rivers.

One day the road builders came to a field where small bushes were growing. The engineer indicated where the future road was to be built, and the workers hammered pegs into the ground.

Suddenly the workers stopped and put down their pegs. Where the road was to pass through stood a mighty oak tree, tall and strong, with a wide trunk, like a sentry guarding the steppe. The workers went over to the engineer. He stood silently, not saying a word. The workers also fell silent.

The engineer looked at his road plans for a long time, then looked at the oak tree and sighed. The workers also sighed deeply.

'We can't change the plan,' said the engineer. 'We can't cut the oak tree down either,' said the workers.

The engineer pulled out a peg, walked a hundred metres from the oak tree and hammered it into the ground.

'Now no-one will judge us,' he said.

Several years passed. A wide asphalt road was laid from north to south, as straight as an arrow. But in one place it was bent like a horseshoe. People driving past in a bus smiled joyfully and said, 'The people who built this road had noble hearts.'

### How Natasha bought a trick from the fox

A fox came to the market and brought a basket full of goods, covered with a white cloth. It was wintertime, and the fox took a place, pulled its fur collar up around its neck, and put its basket on a table. The people saw that its basket was full of tricks.

A school student named Natasha was walking through the market, and saw what the fox was selling. She went over and chose a trick: a little wooden girl holding her hands to her head and pitifully wailing, 'Oh, my head is aching!'

Natasha bought the trick and took it home. She had to do some homework, but she did not feel like it.

'I have a headache,' Natasha complained to her mother. 'I can't do my homework.'

'All right, Natasha, dear, go and lie down,' said her mother.

Natasha lay down on her bed, but immediately forgot her headache, and said to her mother, 'Mum, I am going to go out skating.'

'But you have a headache!' said her mother in amazement.

Natasha blushed with shame.

'I'll take the trick back to the market, and return it to the fox. I don't need its cunning tricks,' decided Natasha. She put her hand into her pocket to find the little wooden girl, but it had gone.

'Where did it go?' she wondered. She had no idea where the trick had gone. She told her mother all about it, and her mother said, 'You frightened the trick away. It's afraid of your conscience.'

'And where is my conscience? How did it know I had one?'

'Because you were ashamed!'

