

Sukhomlinsky News

No. 28

October 2017



Recruiting teachers

As noted last month's newsletter, Sukhomlinsky took a fairly unconventional approach to finding new teachers for his school. In this month's extract from Pavlysh Secondary School, we continue Sukhomlinsky's description of the work of physics teacher Aleksandr Filippov, which is followed by an account of how he recruited a horticulturalist to come and teach biology. Then Sukhomlinsky reflects on the importance of teachers' own passionate desire to learn as an important factor motivating student learning.

Among the stories for children this week is one entitled 'How did it grow on the road?' This little story reminds me of a story by Soviet writer Andrei Platonov, 'The unknown flower', which describes the beauty of a flower that has grown up in exceptionally difficult circumstances. That story in turn is symbolic of Sukhomlinsky's own difficult life.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

The staff at Sukhomlinsky's school

In this month's extract from *Pavlysh Secondary School*, Sukhomlinsky continues his description of teachers at his school (including physics teacher Aleksandr Filippov).

In the room for extracurricular work on technology, interesting work that engaged the children launched into full swing. The students began to construct working models of machinery and mechanical installations. With each year this construction work became more refined and more complex. After constructing a working model of a combustion-fired power station, they went a step further and constructed models with programmed operation, including a working model of an automatic lathe. Each year the supervisor of these technical clubs attracted new helpers, new clubs appeared and new ideas were put into action. After some time had passed, the teacher became 'infected' with the idea of directly converting chemical energy into electrical energy, and attempted to create installations that could function without an electrical generator. This dream took hold of the young technicians, and they began to conduct experiments and trials. Then the physics teacher presented me with a new request: that we open a laboratory for engaging science and technology. The realization of this dream attracted the active involvement of myself and many other teachers. Soon this new laboratory was created, and equipped with everything necessary for the work of our talented young people, for construction, modelling, and for the theoretical study of the achievements of science and technology.

[continued on next page]

From Pavlysh Secondary School [cont.]

In the editorial office of our district newspaper worked a man named Andrei Andreyevich Samkov, a passionate gardener and flower grower. Rumors of his passionate interests reached our school. I went to visit Andrei Andreyevich at his home, and was struck by his love of the soil and of plant life, and by his deep faith in knowledge and science. On his tiny little plot he was cultivating twenty varieties of grapes. I could not help thinking that this man was destined by his very nature to educate children.

Andrei Andreyevich was studying part-time at an agricultural institute. On my advice he began to visit the lessons of experienced teachers, in order to acquire practical teaching skills. Then he was entrusted to conduct lessons in biology. The school's experimental plot and orchard became a genuine centre of research.

Nowadays Mr Samkov runs biology and biochemistry clubs, as well as several clubs for young people interested in conducting experiments in nature. The young horticulturalist has become a talented teacher. He wins children's hearts through his love for his work, and his deep knowledge of his subject. No matter how apparently simple agricultural work may be, he strives to always conduct it on a scientific basis. Into any task he can breathe living ideas that make the work much more interesting. Each year Andrei Andreyevich teaches 150-170 senior students, and in addition he educates another 50 students from junior classes who attend his interest groups.

Among the members of these interest groups there are several young people who he refers to as 'obsessed'. These are children, adolescents, and young men and women, who while still at school

have uncovered outstanding talents as horticulturalists, orchardists, vegetable growers and stockbreeders. He conducts special work with these students.

Over a period of three years Andrei Andreyevich completed a course in pedagogy and the methodology of teaching natural sciences. Under his direction students cultivate grain and industrial crops on a section of the collective farm that is allocated to our school. They conduct experiments, trial new varieties, and study soil properties and local fertilizers. There is now a research centre based around our school experimental plot, under the auspices of a local institute for post graduate studies in education.

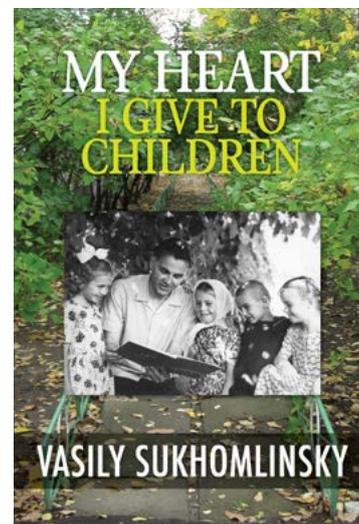
Teachers are the first, and subsequently the main beacons in the intellectual lives of students. They awaken in children a thirst for knowledge, and respect for science, culture and education.

Many years' experience has convinced me that the most important precondition for children's all-round development is the rich, multi-faceted intellectual life of the school staff, their variety of interests, their breadth of outlook, their curiosity and sensitivity to any new developments in science.

This collective wealth is the product of individual, personal wealth. The foundation on which a school stands, and upon which everything that happens in a school depends, is the multi-faceted knowledge, the rich intellectual life, the breadth of outlook and constant intellectual growth of each teacher. Three to five years after graduating from higher educational institutions, teachers should know three, five, or ten times more than they knew during their first year of work. If this does not happen, students

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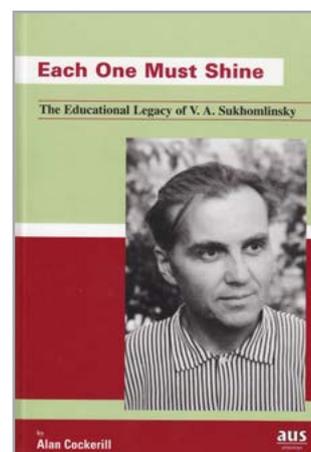
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will be condemned to boring rote learning and the blunting of their intellects, since teaching that is not stoked and illuminated by a teacher's thirst for knowledge becomes an arduous responsibility, a burden, and kills any thirst for knowledge that students may have, destroying their intellectual talents and abilities. Intellectual growth, constant enrichment, renewal, extending, deepening and perfecting knowledge—this is vital for a teacher, especially for those who have been working for ten, twenty or thirty years. The danger of spiritual 'ossification' threatens such teachers no less, and sometimes more, than young teachers. Avoiding any such danger is a collective responsibility.

Each of our teachers is in charge of one, two or more groups, in which the rich and diverse spiritual life of the students wells forth. For each group the teacher is a source of knowledge and exemplifies a love for science. Each teacher through their character, their work, their interests, and their thirst for new knowledge, brings their own personal contribution to our collective multi-faceted spiritual life. I cannot imagine a teacher who does not have the closest links with the spiritual life of the students—not only their own students, but with students in the school community in general. Among our staff there are thirty-five teachers, a senior pioneer leader and a librarian. Each of them is distinguished by something unique and personal.

Of our thirty-five teachers, twenty-five have completed tertiary studies in education, one is

in the process of doing so, seven have completed college training, and two have completed secondary education. Four have between twenty-five and thirty-five years of experience, nine have between twenty and twenty-five years, seven have between fifteen and twenty years, three between ten and fifteen years, six between five and ten years, and four have less than five years teaching experience. Two of our teachers have been working at our school for between twenty-five and thirty years, six for between twenty and twenty-five years, twelve for between fifteen and twenty years, and five for between ten and fifteen years. In other words, twenty-five of our teachers have been working in our school for at least ten years. The stability of our teaching staff is one of the most important reasons that the wealth of pedagogical skill, accumulated over many years, is carefully preserved and handed on to young teachers.

In spite of the fact that so many of our teachers have been teaching for many years, only two of our teachers are over fifty years of age, and the average age of our teachers is thirty-nine.

In the majority of cases, those teachers who have between twenty and thirty years of experience began teaching at the age of seventeen to twenty, and some as young as sixteen. All of our teachers have committed themselves for life to working in a rural school. None of them has any desire to leave the village or to stop teaching. All of the staff, with two exceptions, have families and

children of their own. Our thirty teaching families have sixty-nine children between them. Twenty-eight of those children have graduated from school, eighteen are of pre-school age, and twenty-three are currently studying at our school. Fifteen of our teachers are men, and twenty are women.

These figures are of considerable significance for the character and quality of our teaching staff. At the current time there are 276 children studying at our school, whose parents have also been taught by us. Sometimes you look at a little child or an adolescent, observing their work during a lesson, how they think, how they solve problems, what they are interested in, and you cannot help comparing them with their mother or father, who you have seen sitting in that very same classroom, sometimes at the same desk. Now we are beginning to enroll grandchildren of students who were taught by teachers who have been working in our school for more than twenty-five years. We know the family histories of all our students, and we see how the spiritual worlds of our children are formed. This all helps us to educate them.

The balance of men and women among our staff is also significant. The staff of a school should not be composed only of women. We strive to achieve a balance, considering it important for the correct education of our boys and young men that they receive not only good advice and precepts, but also fatherly, male direction.





Stories for Children

The tractor driver and the glazier

Early one summer morning a tractor driver set off for work. On the way he met a glazier. He greeted him and said, 'You have an easy job, glazier. What do you do? You take glass made by someone else and put it in a frame... People could live without your work. My work is more important. I plough the fields, sow grain and gather in the harvest. Without my work there would be no bread, and people cannot live without bread.' The glazier silently let the tractor driver have his say, and then said, 'Look, there's a cellar over here. Let's go down for a minute.' The tractor driver shrugged his shoulder in surprise, but he followed the glazier. They climbed down some stairs into the cellar. It was so dark in the cellar that you could not see a thing. 'What do you think? Could you live here?' asked the glazier. 'Oh, no. No way,' answered the tractor driver. 'This is what it would be like in every home without my work. Glaziers give people light.' 'It's true,' thought the glazier. 'You can't live without light. People do not live by bread alone. Bread by itself is not enough.'

How did it grow on the road?

A green meadow was bathed in light. In spring, flowers bloomed there, butterflies fluttered and bees hummed. The meadow smelled of honey, like a giant hive.

Beyond the meadow was a forest. To reach the forest, you had to travel around the meadow.

Somebody thought, why should people travel so far around the meadow? Why not make a road through the meadow? And they built a wide, compacted, dusty road. On its wide, grey expanse there was no trace of grass or flower.

One warm spring day, when above the thoughtful meadow a lark sang in the azure sky, two travellers were walking along the road. The heat blazed on the dusty road. One of the travellers, an old man, suddenly stopped in surprise. There, in the middle of the road, was a flower. The other traveller, a little boy, also stopped. They could not take their eyes off the flower. In the midst of the dust it seemed a little island of fairy tale magic.

'How did it grow on the road?' whispered the boy.

'How did it survive?' whispered the grandfather.

The seventh daughter

A mother had seven daughters. One day she went to visit her son, who lived far, far away. She returned home a month later. When she entered the hut, her daughters began, one after the other, to tell her how much they had missed her.

'I longed for you, as a poppy flower longs for the sunlight,' said the first daughter.

'I looked forward to seeing you, as the parched earth looks forward to the rain,' murmured the second daughter.

'I cried for you, as a baby bird cries for the mother bird,' cooed the third daughter.

'It was hard for me without you. I felt like a bee without a flower,' said the fourth daughter, caressing her mother and gazing into her eyes.

'I saw you in my dreams, as a rose dreams of the morning dew,' twittered the fifth daughter.

'I watched for you, as the cherry orchard watches for the nightingale,' whispered the sixth daughter.

The seventh daughter did not say anything, though she had much to say. She took off her mother's shoes, and brought some water in a large bowl to wash her feet.