

Sukhomlinsky News



School traditions

Dear readers,

I hope you are keeping well.

I received some good news this week. The Korean language translation of 'Each one must shine' was published in Seoul last year and has already sold over 1,000 copies. (A cover image is shown below.)

This month's newsletter has more information about the traditions at Pavlysh Secondary School (I like Sukhomlinsky's comments on being mutually supportive), and more of Nataliya Bezsalova's translations from Ukrainian of Sukhomlinsky's little stories for children.

Best wishes,

Alan Cockerill

School traditions in Pavlysh

'If you know how to do something, but your classmate does not yet know how, teach your classmate.'

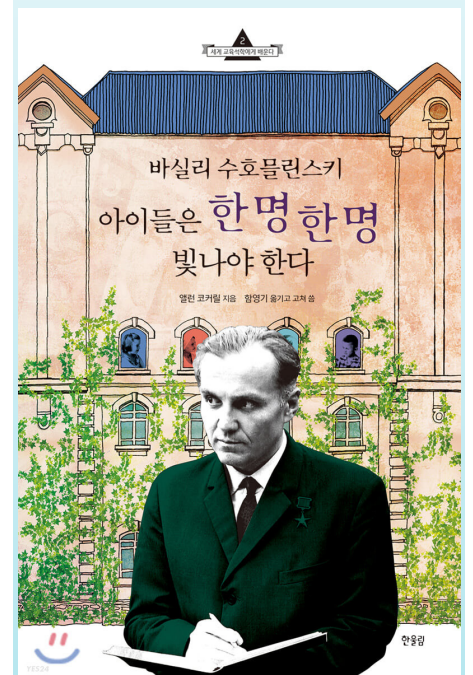
Our traditions (continued)

14. The New Year fir tree for our youngest children. The youngest citizens in our community, who have just learnt to walk and talk, are invited to the school to see our New Year fir tree. They are brought by their mothers. The children are given presents, then watch a performance of the puppet theatre and a performance by their older friends: the grade one students. (The most valuable and interesting aspect of this tradition is that the grade one students take on the role of elders. They help their little friends prepare for this celebration by teaching them to recite poems. Each little guest recites a poem here for the first time.)

15. The winter festival of the snow town. It is not just the junior and middle school students who participate in this festival, but the senior students as well. In a meadow at the edge of the forest, the children construct Grandpa Frost's town from snow, with little houses and towers. It has become a tradition on this day to dine in the snow town, next to the constructed buildings. A meal in the cold always seems very tasty. Then the pre-schoolers play in the snow town until the sun melts it.

An important educational goal for our school community is to educate our students to be mutually supportive, always ready to come to each other's aid. Even in small children we try to arouse feelings of concern for their friends, to teach them to treat one person's misfortune as a misfortune for the whole group.

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School traditions in Pavlysh (cont.)

Developing a collective feeling of solidarity and readiness to help is an important way of preventing egoism. Every child suffers some misfortune while at school. One may fall ill themselves; another's mother may fall ill; a third child may have their nest of pigeons destroyed in a storm; a fourth may lose their dog. All of these cases require friendly interest and sympathy. From a young age we teach children to show kindness to anyone who experiences misfortune. One girl's grandmother was seriously ill for two weeks and then died. Her classmates asked her teacher not to assess the girl's knowledge or ask her to come out to the blackboard until she felt herself again. Throughout that time her classmates, both boys and girls, helped her with her work so she would not fall behind.

'If you know how to do something, but your classmate does not yet know how, teach your classmate.' We instil this thought in children from their first days at school. In our work rooms, workshops, and laboratories, there are special benches for peer tutoring.

16. Work traditions occupy a special place in the life of our school community. Thanks to them, work acquires a romantic aura, and is associated with bright feelings and emotions. The spiritual uplift that children experience while working brings them joy. Work and happiness merge, and this is of great moral significance.

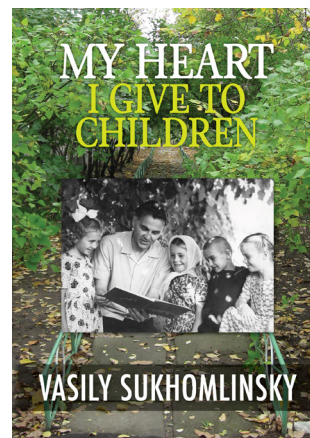
Before the summer holidays, children prepare gifts for the school in the form of visual aids and decorations for the classrooms and the Pioneer room. For instance, the children completing their studies in Ms Nesterenko's grade one class presented the school with 'An album of stories in pictures about what we like most'. On each page is a story by one of the students. When the same children completed their studies in grade two, they gave us an inlaid picture made of pieces of straw from various cereal crops, showing a boy next to a flowering rose bush. At the end of grade three they built a small model house, 'a real one, just like grown-ups build'. A year later they presented us with a collection of samples of grains and other commercial crops, in a beautifully constructed box laminated with fine sheets of wood to look like mother-of-pearl.

The older the children, the more significant the value of the gifts they present to the school. In the middle and senior school years, the work process itself takes on the atmosphere of a celebration, due to the sense of expectation of that proud moment when the work will be completed, and the product will be revealed to the school community. The work of the middle and senior school students reflects the interests of their age group, and their aptitude for certain types of work. The following are the gifts presented to the school by students in various grades at the end of the 1963/64 academic year. The grade five students presented frames for the portraits of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya and Oleg Koshevoy together with embroidered portraits. The grade six students made a working model of a steam engine for the physics laboratory, and embroidered a picture inspired by a folk tale. The grade seven students made a working model of a seed drill. The grade eight students made a working model of a thermal power station and embroidered a portrait of Vladimir Lenin. The grade nine students constructed a working model of an electrified railway with overhead power lines and presented the school with several lemon trees they had raised over a period of three years. The grade ten students made a model car, controlled by radio, and a valve radio.

The year ten students are especially moved by feelings of attachment to the school, by an urge to show gratitude for their education, and

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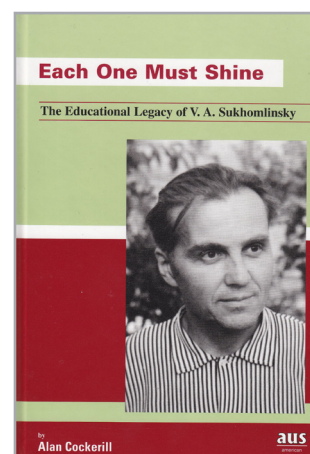
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by feelings of sadness at the upcoming parting with their teachers. They want to leave behind a significant record of their presence at the school that will remind future generations of students of the work of their older comrades. The graduates of the 1964/65 school year laboured to produce two presents for the school: an automated model of a blooming mill and an embroidered picture inspired by Ukrainian folk tales.

A second work tradition is to prepare visual aids for the biology laboratory during the summer holidays: samples of soil, seeds, insects, plant collections, flowers dried in sand to retain their form and colour, botanical presses and other items. Children bring their gifts to school on the first day of lessons.

A third work tradition is to decorate and beautify the classrooms and school yard before the start of the school year and before exams. On the last day of the holidays, 31 August, the students and their teacher come to school and each class group decorates their classroom. They weave garlands of fresh flowers to decorate portraits and place a bouquet of flowers on the teacher's desk. The grade one classroom is decorated by senior students. Then the students work outside, leveling the pathways in the school grounds, loosening the soil in the flowerbeds, and watering the flowers. Within three or four hours the school takes on a smart, festive appearance and in the evening everyone gathers for a Pioneer campfire. People who have graduated from the school many years earlier come with their children. The first day of the school year is a significant event in the children's lives, giving them many joyful experiences.

A fourth tradition is work during the spring and autumn orchard weeks. On the Sunday that marks the beginning of an orchard week, all the students come to school. Each class digs up the cuttings in the school nursery, and prepares holes, fertilisers and water. All the students plant trees, beginning with grade one. The grade one students are helped by the grade four students. That is also a tradition. Each year the grade one students plant one or two trees in the school grounds, the middle school students plant three or four trees per class, and the senior students seven or eight. Each class records the varieties planted and the date of planting in a special 'Orchard Week Book'. The students in the senior classes read the entries they made several years earlier. Their apple trees, cherry trees and pear trees are already bearing fruit. This thought gives rise to a feeling of pride in their work.

Thanks to the fact that the execution of normal agricultural work is framed by a number of solemn rituals, the children feel uplifted, and the beauty of work enriches moral relationships in the school community.

Then the children work in groups and individually

to plant trees in community areas or in their parents' gardens. Each student plants a tree where it will bring joy and benefit not only to their family, but also to other people (e.g. by the side of the road). It has become a tradition for each grade one student to plant an apple tree for their mother, one for their father, one for their grandmother and one for their grandfather, during the first spring of their school lives, and to subsequently take responsibility for the care of these trees. Several years later the trees begin to bear fruit. Each child presents the first apples, and the first grapes planted in the same spring, to their mother, father, grandmother and grandfather. This is a good way of educating feelings of warmth for others. This tradition includes the students' collective work in a communal vineyard and communal orchard planted several years ago. The children experience joy in creating something of value that belongs to everyone.

There is another tradition connected with orchard week. The students exchange fruit tree cuttings and plant them in memory of each other. For instance, one student may bring a nut tree seedling, while others bring cherry trees, plum trees, apple trees, or pear trees... Once they have exchanged trees, they plant them at home or in the school grounds. A tree planted during their school years provides a living reminder of their strong friendship.

A fifth tradition is the day of the first grain harvest. Early in the morning on the first day of the harvest all the students come to school. The teachers congratulate them on the harvest. The senior students and adolescents travel out into the fields and work with the machine operators and animal breeders. The younger students gather the largest heads of wheat and other crops for sowing in our experimental plots. In the evening, they all come to school. On a table covered with an embroidered tablecloth we place a harvested sheaf, as a symbol of abundance, and next to the sheaf, a loaf of bread baked by the senior students. The senior students sing and dance.

A sixth tradition is the day of the first bread. This is a celebration for the junior students. After harvesting wheat from their small plots and separating the grain in a small threshing machine, the children give their grain to the flour mill to make it into flour, and their mothers help them to bake bread. The children invite their mothers to school and treat them to their first bread. This festival expresses very clearly the beauty of work. The days spent preparing for this festival are full of deep emotion.





Stories

There is only one sun

Sashko was sitting at a table in the green garden and doing his homework. Today the teacher had given them an unusual assignment. The children had to look around and evaluate every object close to them and then compare it with another object.

Sashko thought hard. Above, the wind played with the leaves of the aspen. They trembled and whispered all the time as if sharing secrets, just like first-grade girls sharing secrets during the break between classes.

The boy looked at the ground and saw two green leaves with white flowers between them. It was a lily of the valley. Her flowers were just like tiny crystal bells! It seemed you only had to touch them, and they would ring.

He heard a bee buzzing, and then the deep drone of a bumblebee. Sashko closed his eyes and imagined two strings, one thin and one thick. A musician was sitting and playing on both strings. That was what the buzz of the bee and the drone of the bumblebee could be compared to.

A mosquito's high-pitched sound was really hard to compare. Maybe, Sashko thought, it could be compared to a reedpipe made from a dandelion's stem.

The sun was setting. The sky in the west turned red and was like a huge poppy field with thousands of red flowers in bloom. If you could find a field like that, wouldn't it be beautiful!

The sun touched the horizon. The sun was a huge crimson orb... What could it be compared to? Sashko thought for a long time but he could not think of anything, because there is nothing else like it. There really is only one sun.

The swans are leaving

It is a quiet autumn evening. The sun goes to sleep and the purplish red sky on the horizon warns of a windy day to come. But for now, the air is still and motionless.

Suddenly, from beyond the forest, an anxious cry resounds: 'Oh-OH, oh-OH...' A flock of swans is flying high in the sky. Why do they cry out so anxiously?

They seem to be taking something with them from their native land. It reminds me of a fairy tale

told me by my grandmother. She said that when the swans are leaving, their wings sow sadness on the earth. I gaze at the passing flock. The swan's fine wings are tinged with purple from the rays of the setting sun. But sadness cannot be purple! It should be azure or lilac, like the tall, distant hills in the steppes.

'And when the swans return, what do their wings sow?' I asked my grandmother.

'Joy!'

The fields are bare

In late autumn there is nothing in the fields: no ears of grain, no stubble, no straw. Everything has been gathered, harvested, and stored in silos or barns. Young winter crops are the only green in the dark plowed fields. A cold autumn wind sings its songs among the bare trees. Heavy grey clouds float low above the earth. They bring constant drizzle, day after day. The sun is nowhere to be seen. If you come to the field, you cannot tell what time of day it is, morning, afternoon, or evening. The birds have fallen silent.

Two men are crossing the field. One is wearing city clothes. He is visiting for just a few days. Looking at the bare plowed fields, he remarks:

'It is so empty and unwelcoming in the field now. It makes me feel sad. It was quite different in summer when the ears of grain were whispering in the wind.'

The other man is an agricultural scientist. He has been working in these fields for many years. He looks at the bare ploughed fields with joy in his eyes and replies:

'These fields are beautiful now! They are beautiful precisely because they are bare.'

The rainbow

Beyond the pond there is a blue cloud, with a rainbow shining right through it—a mixture of yellow, green, blue and red. It is as if a multi-coloured milkmaid's yoke is hanging over the river. Beyond the forest, high in the mountains, lives a mighty giant named Thunderstorm. He takes this wondrous milkmaid's yoke and draws a bucket of water from the pond. Then he pours the water into the cloud, so that rain can fall from it.

