

Synopsis for *Our School In Pavlysh: A Holistic Approach to Education*

2-line Summary:

Our School in Pavlysh is an inspiring account of the holistic and natural system of education developed by Vasily Sukhomlinsky and his staff at his combined primary and secondary school in a Ukrainian village.

Short Synopsis:

Our School in Pavlysh is an inspiring account of the holistic system of education developed by Vasily Sukhomlinsky and his dedicated staff at a combined primary and secondary school in the Ukrainian village of Pavlysh during the 1960s. In the vibrant learning community at his school, teachers, parents, students and members of the community all played a role in educating each other.

Medium Synopsis:

Our School in Pavlysh describes the inspirational work carried out at Pavlysh Secondary School in central Ukraine during the 1960s. Raising his school from the ashes of World War II, Sukhomlinsky created a system of education that was deeply embedded in the natural environment and that fostered the qualities of curiosity, empathy and creativity. Students enrolling in Sukhomlinsky's school became part of a vibrant learning community in which teachers, parents, community members, and the students themselves all played a role in educating each other. A multitude of informal, extracurricular activities helped to develop children's talents, building their self-esteem, and providing an experiential background for formal studies. In this environment students became autonomous, lifelong learners.

Long Synopsis:

Our School in Pavlysh describes the inspirational work carried out at Pavlysh Secondary School in central Ukraine during the 1960s. For Sukhomlinsky's readership of teachers and school principals, the word 'Pavlysh' stood for creative thought, inspiration, and the hope of finding answers to troubling questions. Raising his school from the ashes of World War II, Sukhomlinsky created a system of education that was deeply embedded in the natural environment and that fostered the qualities of curiosity, empathy and creativity. One of the thousands of visitors to Pavlysh, a school principal from Armenia, wrote:

'I have spent only one day in this remarkable school where so much is happening, but I have gained as much as I did in four years at the institute.'

Another visiting principal wrote:

'Pavlysh Secondary School should be renamed a university! We say this quite responsibly: here a feeling of wonder and admiration comes over anyone with the slightest love for children and schools.'

Students enrolling in Sukhomlinsky's school became part of a vibrant learning community in which teachers, parents, community members, and the students themselves all played a role in educating each other. Dozens of clubs operated after school, most attended by children of varying ages, and the older children played a significant role in educating younger children. These informal, extracurricular activities were extremely important in developing children's talents, building their self-esteem, and providing an experiential background for formal studies. In this environment students became autonomous, lifelong learners.

Although Sukhomlinsky was working in Soviet Ukraine, many of his concerns are universal, and still relevant to us today. Themes treated in the book include:

- Implementing professional development for teachers through long term mentoring arrangements and regular staff discussions.
- Focusing on understanding the psychology of each individual student and adjusting educational methodologies accordingly.
- Ensuring students enjoy optimum health, to provide a foundation for all other areas of development. This was done through comprehensive health screening, including screening of sight and hearing; through liaising with families; and through making student health the number one priority throughout all the years of schooling.
- Teaching students to be resilient and self-disciplined, through practical training in following routines, through liaising with families, and through setting appropriately challenging activities.
- Motivating students to learn through emotions of wonder and excitement, often by taking students out into natural surroundings. Providing first-hand experiences as the basis for language development and thought (gradually moving from the concrete to the abstract).
- Educating students to be custodians of the natural environment and responsible citizens, through practical outdoor activities.
- Fostering empathy and supportive peer relationships among students, through personal example and through group activities.
- Reducing administrative loads to make sure teaching staff have sufficient free time to rest, to read, and to develop their knowledge.
- Utilising extracurricular activities and multi-age peer tutoring to foster intellectual and vocational development.
- Running extensive parenting programs for the parents at his school, as a way of integrating the efforts of school and families. Sessions were run twice a month in groups based on the age of the parents' children, and offered in-depth knowledge about child development. They also provided recommendations to parents about diet and routines.

Sukhomlinsky's approach can still offer inspiration to educators in the twenty-first century, as we face the challenges of the Anthropocene. This new translation provides an excellent complement to Alan Cockerill's earlier translation of Sukhomlinsky's *My Heart I Give to Children*.

5 Points of Interest about the Book:

1. Sukhomlinsky's books have been read by millions of educators around the world, but he remains relatively unknown in English-speaking countries. This book has never before been translated into English. Alan Cockerill's translation is part of a long-term strategy to make Sukhomlinsky's key works available to English-speaking educators, in the belief that Sukhomlinsky's holistic approach is very relevant to our current challenges.

2. The system of education developed by Sukhomlinsky at his combined primary and secondary school was deeply embedded in the natural environment. Students spent a great deal of time outdoors observing nature and interacting creatively with it. Sukhomlinsky and his staff educated their students to be responsible custodians of the natural environment, to plant trees, to guard against erosion, to improve soil fertility, and to protect vegetation and wildlife. Over a period of twenty years students at Sukhomlinsky's school completely transformed an area of 40 hectares around the school, making it a place of great beauty.

3. Sukhomlinsky's top priority in educating his students was their physical and mental health. Excellent health and vitality provided a foundation for all personal growth. Comprehensive health screening of students was conducted two years before they commenced schooling, and close contact was maintained with families throughout a child's studies. Every activity in the school, academic or extracurricular, was

organised with student health in mind. (e.g. The most intellectually taxing subjects, such as mathematics, grammar, and sciences, were programmed for early in the day.) Mental health was supported through the development of supportive peer relationships, and through the development of self-discipline and healthy routines.

4. Sukhomlinsky and his staff ran extensive parenting programs for the parents at his school, as a way of integrating the efforts of school and families. Sessions were run twice a month in groups based on the age of the parents' children and offered in-depth knowledge about child development. They also provided recommendations to parents about diet and routines.

5. A key feature of Sukhomlinsky's approach to education was the conscious fostering of the personal quality of empathy. Students were taught to read people's eyes and body language, and to give each other mutual support. They were taught to care for plants and animals, and to show kindness to friends, family and members of the community.

Book Details and Purchase Information

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6.30 pm Monday 20 December (Attend in person or online)

<https://avidreader.com.au/events/alan-cockerill-our-school-in-pavlysh>

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Author Website: <http://theholisticeducator.com/sukhomlinsky/>