

Participant 1 - River of experience

(translation of participant's notes to their river)

1. Choice

In 1999, I graduated from Svobodian Secondary School I-III, after which I could not decide for a long time what I wanted to become. But I knew for sure that I didn't want to be a teacher! Being blessed with great gifts: perfect pitch and musical education, artistic skills, sophisticated knowledge of mathematics and physics, and at the same time an author of poems and fairy tales, I had the opportunity to enter several universities.... But my parents did not allow it. They made the decision for me - I had to become a teacher! Why? I don't know, but it was their decision. I did everything not to give in... but I didn't succeed. I also decided that if this was my fate, I would never teach children the way I was taught! The child and his capabilities would always come first, and only then, the program.

2. Marriage.

In 2004, I graduated from university and immediately started working at Chervoniv Secondary School I-III. I was given the first grade to teacher on September 1, and I got married on the 4th. While happiness overflowed with my loved one, at work, everything was very difficult.... Colleagues completely ignored this young specialist, not wanting to help. Therefore, I made many mistakes, for which I was constantly reproached by my superiors.

3. Loss

The only thing that made me happy was my pregnancy. But fate turned out to be cruel. She took a part of me - my son, who lived only 2 days.... Just 2 days! Pain, horror, depression overcame me.... What next? I didn't want to live.... Only the love and support of my husband forced me to stand on my feet and take care of myself! Therefore, I returned to school and devoted myself to the children. We achieved incredible results. My students were successful and self-confident. That's how I became successful and self-confident, too!

4. Happiness

In 2007, I became a happy mother!!! I had a son, my happiness and joy. I was ready for anything for his sake. Due to difficult living conditions, I was forced to go back to work in 2008, leaving my baby with my mother. Top results were achieved by giving 100%. My students showed a great desire to learn and explore the world. Develop and create. Our successes were noticed in the Education Ministry, and they valued my work very highly. But did my school superiors value it? Not at all! They began to put pressure on me, demanding that I adhere to teaching methods that, in my opinion, had long been outdated. And I became fed up.... When the students finished the 4th grade, I left.

5. Changes

In 2012, I started working at Yanoshiv Secondary School I-III. It was a real challenge, because the students in this school did not speak Ukrainian, Russian, or any other language related to Ukrainian. These were children from Hungarian families, in which almost no one spoke the state language. And yet mine was a Ukrainian language class! Was it difficult? Certainly! But here I was lucky with my superiors, who gave me a free hand and the opportunity to teach as I see fit, so

long as there were positive results. And there were!!! Inspired by the idea of child-centrism, I did everything to make children love to learn. Students, in whose success no one believed, became some of the strongest in the school. I was proud of them!

6. Pain

Everything continued along very well.... But in April 2014, my father died unexpectedly. Six months later, my father-in-law fell ill with cancer and also died, in April 2015. My husband joined the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in 2015-2016, finding himself in the hellish conditions of the front line. Fear and despair were destroying me. After my husband returned, my mother-in-law fell ill with cancer.... Lengthy treatment, huge debts, my husband had to go abroad to earn money.... This period was like a black shroud that hung over my family. But faith in better things to come, and strength of spirit, did not allow us to break and we got up from our knees to live better and be happy.

7. A new start

In 2015, I became an active participant in an authorial seminar-training module on the methodology of teaching the course 'Creating a Good Neighbourhood Culture' in general educational institutions of the Transcarpathian region within the framework of the project 'Development of intercultural education in Ukraine', with the support of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, a course I instituted in my classroom. Here I was inspired by new methods of working with children that contributed to their overall development.

It was a bright beginning of new opportunities. I had the largest classes, in which students traveled from seven villages. And they all came not knowing the Ukrainian language at all. But by graduation - fluency in the Ukrainian language, active participation in all possible competitions and Olympiads, a high level of knowledge in core subjects, creativity, artistry, and self-confidence. Since 2016, I cooperated with the charitable fund 'Advance Transcarpathian Centre for Development and Consultations' and taught their Comprehensive Instructional Program as part of the project 'Integrated learning in the Yanoshiv village school'. This was yet another program that helped me find new ways to improve students' knowledge and mastery of the language.

8. New opportunities

Many people became interested in the success of my students, so I started attending seminars, EdCamps, and workshops where I not only gained new knowledge, but also shared my teaching experience. From 2018, by order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, I became a regional coach of the New Ukrainian School (NUS) program. To this day, I conduct courses and other training for elementary school teachers who teach students within the NUS program. I was invited to work as a methodologist by the Department of education, youth, and sports of the Berehiv district administration in the Transcarpathian region. I was responsible for the elementary level, led methodological groups, seminars, etc.

9. Achievements

In February 2019, I organized and ran the Yanoshiv regional mini-EdCamp together with a great team. More than 200 educators from all over Ukraine attended. Two parallel sessions, 18 speakers, representatives of the Department, and of the Ministry of Education and Science. It was

a great event, about which we still receive positive feedback. This was an experience that further inspired new achievements.

I received several awards recognizing these successes, had the opportunity to travel around Ukraine, witness the experiences of teachers from other regions, and make new friends who, like me, strove to improve their skills and knowledge for successful work with students.

In 2019, I decided to test my competence and so, registered and successfully passed the pilot certification for elementary school teachers. It was a difficult and at the same time interesting experience. Difficult - because I didn't know what would happen, because it was the first year of the introduction of a new independent method of studying the experience of elementary school teachers. Interestingly, I had the opportunity to verify the effectiveness of my work, which was studied by independent experts. After confirming my professional qualifications, I was involved in various educational activities in the region. These were NUS training sessions, such as institutional audit.

I took many online courses on various platforms to improve my skills on various topics (there are a lot of them, so I will not list them). But despite all the successes and achievements, I experienced the most pleasure from working with my students, who constantly inspired me with new ideas.

10. Youth policy

Parallel with my work at school, I became interested in youth politics. Why? It's very simple! I saw that if children are busy in elementary school, by the time they are in high school they are *not*. They have nowhere to go, they don't know what to do. After all, there are still some groups and programs in the cities, but in the villages...they simply have nowhere to go. And that's why my colleague and friend, Angelica Ulyhanets, and I decided to do something about it. We completed training and took part in a project to create a youth space.

The idea interested our youth and the head of the territorial administration. He proposed a space that once belonged to an old club. We implemented various projects with the youth of the territorial community, especially on eco-related topics, we continue to hold educational and youth conferences, meetings, and exchanges. We are engaged in charity work; we help a local children's shelter.

11. Change of work

In 2021, my friend Angelica became the principal of the school in my village and suggested I join her. I hesitated for a long time. Nevertheless, I decided to go to her and agreed to the position of vice-principal of education and training at the Ivan Franko Bakosh Lyceum. It turned out that this was the right decision because we, as a team, have already implemented many ideas so that the school has begun to develop and change. In the future, we will implement a new youth policy in cooperation with the student self-government, which actively participates in improving the educational process, as well.

12. War

But everything changed on February 24, 2022, when Russia attacked our country. The terrible word 'WAR' took us by surprise...

Perhaps our region does not experience the terrible shelling that kills, but we do not sit idly by. Our men went to the front. And we collect aid and accept refugees. Sleeping places, three meals a day, and showers were installed for them in the classrooms.

Currently, we have almost 40 children whom we do not neglect. We created a recreation room for them, and our student self-government spends their leisure time running activities with them. Hopefully, this horror will end, and we will all remember this war only as a terrible dream. In the meantime, Ukraine - forever!!!

