

VASYL STUS SCHOOL OF UKRAINIAN STUDIES

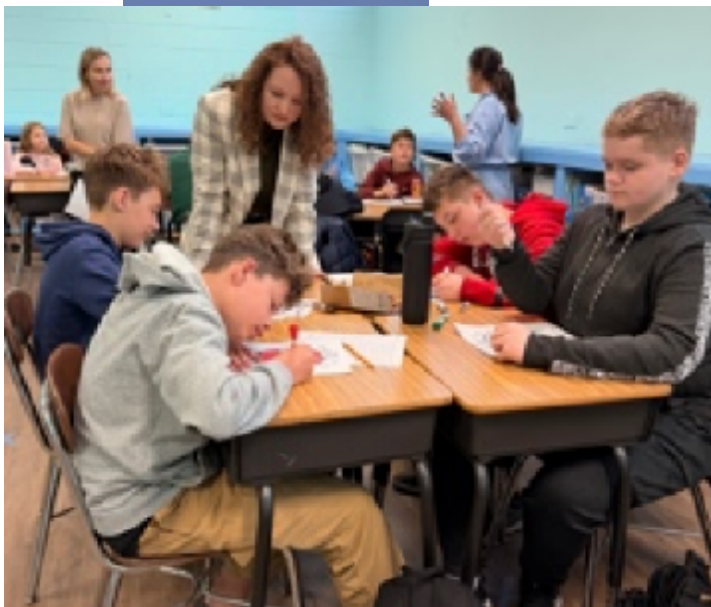
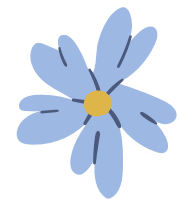


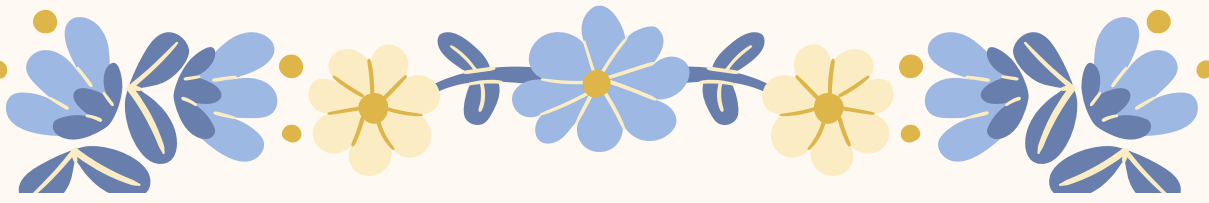
It is hard to believe that our 2025-26 school year is quickly coming to a close! It seems like only yesterday we welcomed students on their first day with a Liturgy at St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church. We are so proud of the various accomplishments of our students, impressed with the dedication of our teachers and administrators, and grateful to parents who understand the importance of nurturing the language, culture, and history of our dear homeland. Below are notifications about the events to wrap up the year, along with a look ahead to our 2026-27 school year.



Guests Speakers

On May 25th, educators from Ukraine's Hrystia Hranovska Foundation, who helped rework the program for history and culture for Ukrainian schools in the diaspora, presented to the 7th and 8th graders and to members of the Parents Board. These programs are already in use by Ukrainian students of Austria, France, and Great Britain. We will be the first school in the United States with whom they will collaborate and share their materials.





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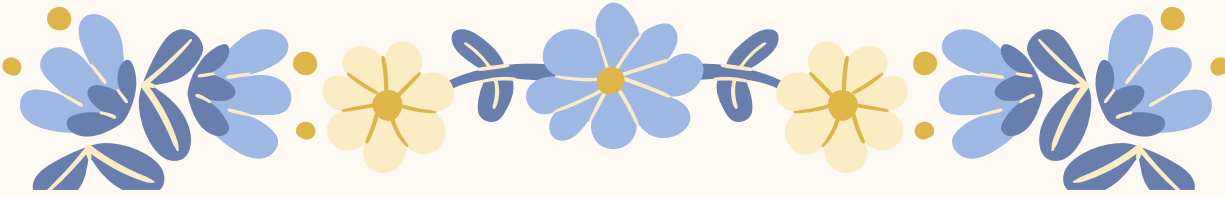
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Matura

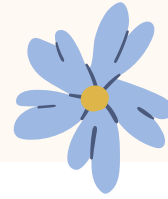
The 10th grade began their culmination examinations as of Saturday April 25th. On April 25, students will take the oral matura exams in all Ukrainian studies subjects. On May 2, they will have written exams in Ukrainian language, history, and geography, and on May 9, each student will defend a project on Modern Ukraine. Each student conducted individual research on topics related to Modern Ukraine (Ukrainian sports, the youth organizations SUM and PLAST in Ukraine and the diaspora, the current war, 40 years since the Chernobyl disaster, contemporary music and cinema, the Holodomor, and the destruction of the Ukrainian nation). We wish our soon-to-be graduates best of luck! Please also consider joining them for their graduation party at the Ukrainian Cultural Center on May 30 th at 5pm.





Mother's Day

ТРАВЕНЬ



On Saturday **May 9th** at 11:30am we welcome all mothers, grandmothers, godmothers, and aunts to join our younger school student body as they honor the loving, devoted, and wonderful mother figures in our lives.

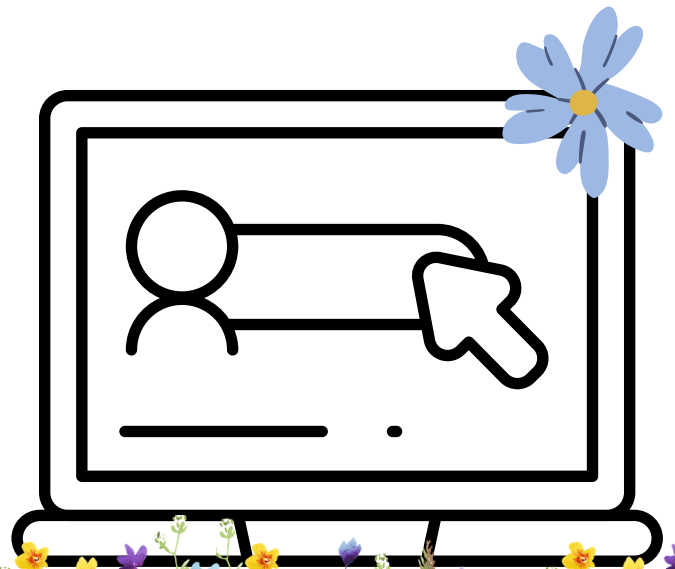


Останній дзвоник

The Final Bell will sound on **May 30th** , beginning with a Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas Cathedral at 9:30am, followed by the presentation of 10th grade graduation certificates, and a brief program. We invite all families to come join the students for our last Saturday's events. Please note that students will be dismissed from the school immediately following the program..

Registration for 2026-2027

If you did not yet register for the 2026-27 school year, do not fret. There is plenty of time to do so. You can register through your School Cues account. If you need help navigating the system, please email ridnashkolachicago@gmail.com.





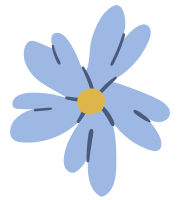
Amazon

ТРАВЕНЬ

Parent support is paramount to the successful running of our school. We invite you to help stock our classrooms with needed teaching and learning materials for the school via our Amazon wish list that can be found here.



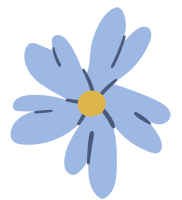
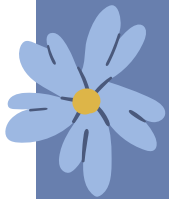
The Parents Board needs your help!



We also encourage parents to join our Parents Board which makes decisions for the improved running of our school. The Board also helps coordinate events and programming, such as Ukrainian as a Second Language (USL). We will be holding our Parents Board annual elections on **May 16 th at 11am** on the 2 nd floor of the old building. We invite and highly encourage all parents to attend to hear about the state of our school, the year's events, and to identify the new board.

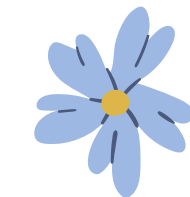
Meeting Agenda

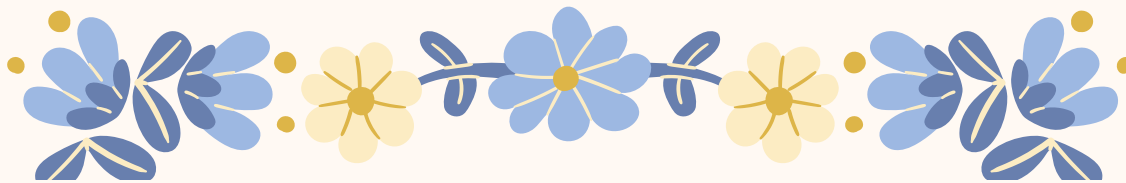
- a. Opening and prayer
- b. Welcome and Report from the Parents Board President, Iryna Ostafiichuk
- c. Report from the Parents Board Treasurer, Maryna Byentsa
- d. Report from the USL Committee provided by Olena Vasilik
- e. Report from the School Director, Natalia Ponomaryova
- f. Parents Board Elections
- g. Closing



Spotlight on a Teacher

This month's "Spotlight on a Teacher" features our school director, Pani Natalia Ponomaryova. Mrs. Ponomaryova has brought her energy and spirit to the director position for 8 years after being a teacher for 13 years before that. Under her leadership, our programming continues to evolve.





SPOTLIGHT ON A TEACHER

Natalia Ponomoaryova

1. What do you teach at the Vasyl Stus Ukrainian School?

At the Vasyl Stus Ridna Shkola, I teach subjects in the Ukrainian studies curriculum: Ukrainian history, Ukrainian literature, culture, and language. I have also worked with students of various age groups, from the youngest classes to graduating high school seniors. During this school year, I am teaching the course “Modern Ukraine” to 10th grade students.

2. What professional and personal experience has helped you in your role as a teacher at the Ukrainian School?

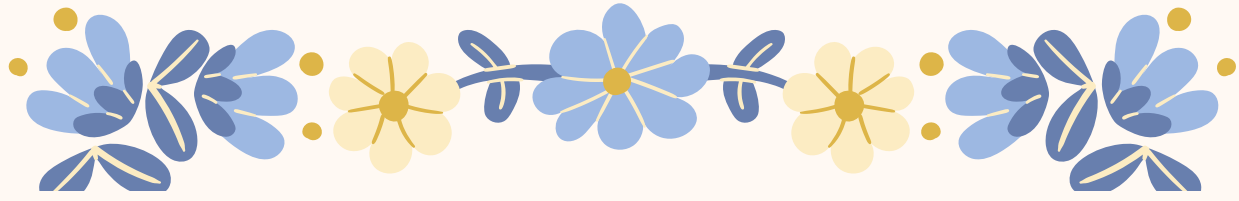
My journey at the school began in 2005 as a secretary. Later, I was invited to join the teaching staff, and I began working with first grade students. After that, I was entrusted with organizing a USL class, where students of different ages (second and third graders) studied together. It was a great challenge, but together with these students we traveled a long road through 10th grade, and they successfully passed their matura exams. Later, I worked with middle and high school students, teaching history, literature, and culture. I was then appointed assistant principal of the school.

All of these stages of work allowed me to deeply understand the needs of students, parents, and the teaching staff. I have continually improved my knowledge, completed professional development courses for teachers in Ukrainian studies schools, and earned certifications that authorize me to teach various disciplines in Ukrainian studies programs in all schools of Ukrainian studies.

3. What is your teaching philosophy?

My teaching philosophy is centered on finding an approach for each student, regardless of age or level of preparation. For me, it is important to create a kind, safe, and inspiring atmosphere in the classroom where a child feels confident and comes to school with joy. I believe learning should bring not stress, but enjoyment, motivation, and a desire to grow.





SPOTLIGHT ON A TEACHER

Natalia Pnomaryova

4. What is your favorite Ukrainian book and why?

I love literature deeply, both Ukrainian and world literature. I enjoy reading not only fiction but also publicistic and intellectual works. Among my favorite Ukrainian writers, a special place belongs to Ivan Bahriany and his novel *The Garden of Gethsemane*, Taras Shevchenko, Ivan Franko, Oleksandr Oles, Vasyl Symonenko, and Ivan Ohiyenko. Among publicists, I highly value the works of Mykola Mikhnovsky, one of the first ideologists of Ukrainian statehood, Yurii Shevelov, Yevhen Fedorenko, and Myron Kuropas, who was among the first to describe the lives of Ukrainian immigrants in the United States. I also have deep respect for Iryna Farion, a person of strong convictions and dedication to the Ukrainian cause. One book especially meaningful to me is *Language Norm*, autographed and gifted to me by her. I have also donated some of the books she personally gave me to our school library. However, the most precious books for me remain two small books I inherited from my grandparents: a little prayer book and a collection of Ukrainian folk songs, *Strings of the Heart*, published in 1960. I brought them with me to the United States more than twenty years ago, and they hold a special place in my home library and in my heart.

5. What is your favorite Ukrainian city and why?

I have traveled extensively and have become convinced that every city has its own unique beauty. But the dearest city to me will always be Ternopil, where I was born and with which I feel a deep spiritual connection. At the same time, Chicago holds a special place in my life, as it has become my second home and a city of new opportunities.

6. What excites you most about teaching at the Ukrainian School?

My greatest joy and pride are our students and graduates, who continue to maintain ties with their native school and the Ukrainian community even after graduating. What is especially moving is that after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many of our graduates joined in helping Ukraine. Among them are doctors, volunteers, engineers, lawyers, and representatives of many other professions who selflessly devote their time, work, and knowledge to support the homeland in difficult times.

When I ask them how they came to feel Ukraine's pain so deeply and at the same time such sincere love for our motherland, they reply: "Because you taught us that, Pani Natalia." Those words are my greatest reward and confirmation that the work of a teacher and educator carries profound meaning and leaves a lasting mark on the hearts of the younger generation.