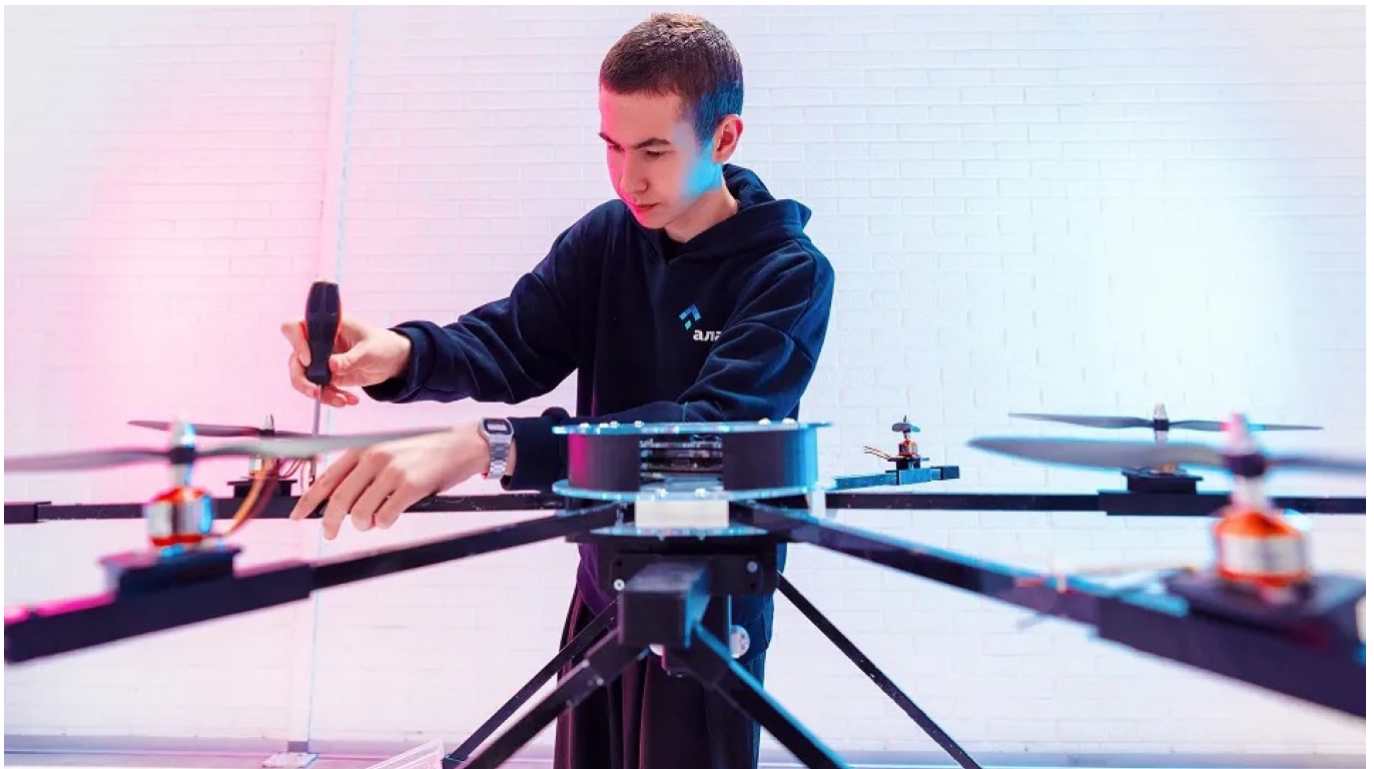


# Moscow Shows Little Faith in the Potential of Russian Children

By [Valery Panyushkin](#)

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A young man constructs a drone at the Alabuga plant in the republic of Tatarstan. **Alabuga**

In 2024, the most recent year I could find data for, only [43%](#) of Russian schoolchildren moved from ninth grade into 10th. For modern Russia, this is a historic low of 16–17 year olds in education.

There appears to be a concerted effort aimed at getting children to enroll in vocational colleges, acquire a useful profession early instead of spending another two years studying God knows what.

I remember that back in the U.S.S.R., my mother did not merely get upset when I received a bad grade at school. She was genuinely frightened. She would say: “You’ll end up in vocational school, you won’t get into university. Everything will be lost!”

Such a danger really did exist for young people back then. And now it exists again.

There are many supposedly rational grounds for a state policy aimed at pushing children out of the academic track and into vocational colleges.

First, educating a child for 11 years is significantly more expensive than educating one for nine. Since the state needs money for the war, there is no point in wasting it.

Second, a young person who completes 11th grade may perhaps have read more books and may even have grasped that the Earth is a sphere that revolves around the Sun. But they still cannot actually do anything, which means they will spend another five years drifting around a university — possibly even on a state-funded place. That's more money spent not on the war, but on educating people who may become art historians. Whereas after college, a young person will immediately start working, making something for the military and, at the very least, paying taxes that can be spent on producing the drones the country so badly needs.

Third, why educate these blockheads at all, the ones scraping by from failing grades to barely passing ones and who do not want to know anything? And, for that matter, why educate the others either? Let them work. And if they cannot work either, let them go to the front and die there. No one needs to be taught how to do that; any failing student is capable of it.

There is a logic to these arguments. But how did we allow Social Darwinists and Malthusians not only to sit in Russia's State Duma, not only to form the government, but also to work in the education system?

We have more or less grown used to the cannibalistic policies enacted by Russian statesmen — although perhaps wrongly. We even regard the cruelty of administrators as a virtue and call it strength — again, wrongly.

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But a teacher is a different matter!

They should surely want to sow the eternal values of goodness and reasonableness. A teacher should surely try to coax curiosity out of everyone, even the troublemaker in the back row. It is normal for a finance minister to want to save money on education — although we were wrong to reconcile ourselves to that thought too — but an education minister should surely be thinking about how to bring the maximum amount of knowledge and skills to the maximum number of young people.

No! They are not thinking about that. They are thinking about how to reduce education in the interests of the state. That is, in the interests of the war.

What I am about to say may sound like a high-minded platitude, but I will say it anyway. Education workers in Russia today have their understanding of the interests of the state completely wrong. People don't exist to start working for the state as soon as possible, supporting it more with their taxes and dying for it more often at the front. On the contrary, the state exists in order to educate children — and adults too — to care for the health and welfare of citizens, and to nurture culture.

The state has no other functions. All its other functions were invented by cannibals to justify

eating their own.

The most upsetting thing is that many people consider the outflow of children from schools normal. There are even teachers who support this outflow, who carry it out with their own hands, instead of tearing their hair out in despair at the sight of that 43%.

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I'll end with some comments I found on social media that show how parents feel about this clipping of their children's wings.

"They didn't take him. Can you imagine? They didn't take him into 10th grade! With a 4.45 average, with no threes ["satisfactory"] on his certificate, with no threes on his ninth-grade exams! I've already screamed and cried. I don't know what to do! It's a nightmare. I'm in shock."

"Since when do schools no longer want to take children into 10th grade after ninth? Since when do we now have a competitive selection system for 10th grade? Vladik has no twos ["unsatisfactory"] on his certificate; he has threes, fours ["good"] and fives ["excellent"]. An ordinary, average student. And they are refusing to admit him to 10th grade, saying it will be too hard for him! They decided for him that he will not cope with studying in 10th and 11th grade. Out of four ninth-grade classes, they are forming only two 10th-grade classes!"

"My daughter has only four grade fours and the rest fives, but at the interview with the principal they tore her down so badly that she called me in tears and said, "Come." I went in, and the principal started spewing such filth that at first I was completely thrown, and then I started defending my child. They can go to hell. What do they mean, she 'won't manage' 10th grade, 11th grade and the Unified State Exam? What kind of teachers are these, who 'motivate' children to study in that way?"

*The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.*

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