

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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Photo: Mike Kenney

Thankful

BY JEN REITER

In this most unusual school year, it is sometimes easy to just think about all that we are missing. I miss seeing my kids' smiles as they are hidden behind face masks each day. I miss group work. I miss my flexible seating, assemblies, and spontaneous hugs from my students.

But if dogs have anything to teach us, it's to find the happy and to be thankful for all we do have. So in that vein, here are some lessons taught to me by the Iditarod sled dogs that I'm eternally grateful for:

1. Love unconditionally
2. Live life with enthusiasm
3. Teamwork is always the way to go
4. Eat what you are served
5. Get out and explore new trails

I'm sure you or your students could add more to my list! Be sure to count your blessing this month... I know the dogs are!



November Teaching Ideas

HEIDI SLOAN

Geography

Glogster - The Iditarod, Machu Picchu, and Denali

Incorporate the Iditarod all year long with [this lesson](#) in world civilizations and the Iditarod! Learn another avenue for meshing technology into social studies as well!

Math

A New Twist on Musher Trading Cards!

Use [this Iditarod version of Top Trump](#) cards to encourage place value review!

Language Arts

Adopting Copernicus

What happens to sled dogs who are not competitive? What if they don't want to run? Here's [a real life story](#) about Copernicus the sled dog. A lesson on finding the beginning, middle, and end of a story for young students is also included.

See Think Wonder

Here's a great picture for a See, Think, Wonder activity. After observing this Mike Kenney photo, have the students make a three column chart. In the first column, they can list things they see or observe in the photo. In the second, they can record thoughts or predictions. In the final column, they can list wonders or questions they still have. See the Primary Source of the Month later in this newsletter for a related source!

"You know, a dog can snap you out of any kind of bad mood that you're in faster than you can think of."

Jill Abramson



Updates from the EDU Trail

Checking in with our EDU Team to see what you can expect this month:

A Sneak Peek at the Upcoming November Teacher on the Trail Posts

Jim Deprez,
2021 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail

For me, November is when I start to reflect on things; the start of the school year, and the personal goals I have for the current year, amongst others. With Thanksgiving at the end of the month, I am looking forward to spending time with my family, and I KNOW the kids are looking forward to a little break as well. With this anticipation, their motivation and focus might start to drift a little. The Red Lantern is something that resembles the characteristics of determination, grit and a “never give up” attitude amongst mushers. Using a Red Lantern as a symbol of these traits, I try to instill these same qualities in my classroom. I also used it to inspire my final post this month; examining the difference between the Red Lantern and the Widow’s Lamp because yes, they are 2 completely separate things!

Moments with Mushers: Characteristics

With Veteran’s Day coming up later this month, I started thinking about what it takes to be in the military, and some of the characteristics needed to serve our country: bravery, selflessness, loyalty to name a few. I have the highest respect for those who serve, and this got me thinking about the characteristics or qualities that mushers must possess to do what they do. So I asked some mushers about what they thought the most important characteristic is for a musher. Take a look at some of their responses in my November 1st article.



Cindy Abbott with her Red Lanterns/ photo: Terrie Hanke

Classroom Connections: Red Lantern Award

It is about this time of year that the class has really settled into their routines and is looking forward to Thanksgiving and the holiday break. For me, it is ALSO a time when students start to not necessarily give the same effort that was there at the beginning of the year. For this reason, I have developed a lesson to assist with students that might be looking forward to the breaks a little early. This lesson is to help keep the motivation amongst your students while you continue to teach your content!

Misconceptions and More: Red Lantern vs. Widow’s Lamp

This is another one of those things that I discovered that I had been teaching incorrectly, and want to help set the record straight for everyone else too. There are two separate lamps that are both found at the finish of the race. Only one is red however, and both are significant for very different reasons. Come back on the 20th to learn a little more about these two important icons of the finish line in Nome.



The Widow's Lantern / photo: Kelly Villar

Socially Distanced Dogs

by: Gypsy

Hi Friends!

Many of you have had different school experiences in 2020. You may be learning with your teacher through a computer, or you may be at school, socially distanced from other classmates and wearing a mask all day.

Did you know that we sled dogs socially distance part of the day in our dog kennels? Musherers frequently have 20+ dogs in their dog yards. That's a lot of dogs to annoy each other! Most sled dog kennels have little houses for each dog. We each have our own bowls for food and water. When we aren't out running in the snow, pulling sleds, or playing in the play area, we stay by our little houses, close enough to our neighbors to sniff and play; however, we are also able to get away and have time by ourselves.

Musher Aliy Zirkle was recently asked if she and her husband, musher Allen Moore, are doing anything different with socially distancing their dogs. She responded that no people come to their kennel right now. The dogs only see other dog teams when they pass each other on trails, a few feet apart. She usually travels to Anchorage, a 7-8 hour trip from their home, a couple times a month to speak or help with a community project. She isn't doing that now. The last time she was in Anchorage was when she flew into the airport from Nome after the 2020 Iditarod.

Will sled dogs socially distance when pulling a sled? They are hooked by harnesses to tug lines, which are then hooked to the approximately 45 feet long gangline. Each sled dog usually runs with a dog partner, running two by two. If the tug lines are taut, the dogs are distanced about 2 feet apart. While running with a partner dog, some dogs stay on their own side of the gang line, looking straight ahead, staying socially distanced. But, there are always those sled dogs that like to duck under the line and run right next to their buddy! That's not social distancing. Hope those dogs never have to wear a mask!

Until next time, this was your canine reporter,
Gypsy



In the Dog Yard



Everyone on Their Side



Closer is Better/ photos: Heide Sloan

Husky Talk

by: Erin Montgomery



One of the forgotten members of the mushing team is the handler. The handler is an extremely important part of the team. Last year we wanted to give our listeners more information about what a handler does and what their goals are. In episode 24 of season 3, we sat down and talked with one of Jeff King's handlers, Sean Underwood. Sean talked with us about what it is like to be a handler for the famous Jeff King. He shared with us all the roles and responsibilities of a handler. Sean also talked with us about his goals as a musher. His main goal was to run the Iditarod in 2021. A few weeks after our conversation with Sean, Jeff King came down with an unexpected illness that kept him from running the Iditarod. With a few days notice, Sean Underwood was now going to be running the Iditarod one year earlier than expected.

Our second episode of this season we check back in with Sean. The students talk with Sean about what it was like to go from helping Jeff prepare for the Iditarod to preparing to run the Iditarod himself in a matter of hours. They also talk with him about what his experience on the trail was like. Sean will be back this year for the Iditarod and the kids will talk with him about how his experience last year will help him train this year.

Get your students ready for our Sean Underwood podcast by having them complete the **[Iditarod Dog Handlers Hyperslide activity](#)**. Students will be able to explore an article and video about dog handlers, as well as learn about Sean.

If your class wants to be featured on Husky Talk, follow our Iditarod EDU Facebook page to see who future podcasts will be with. Your students can email us at **huskytalk1@gmail.com** and ask a question they would like us to ask our guest. We will ask their question and say their name. You can also email us if you would like to hear a certain guest on our show.



photo: Jeff Schultz

Teaching with the Insider

by: Jane Holmes

Summary:

These video segments feature authorities speaking about the makeup of sled dogs, their genetic disposition to run, the care and training they receive, and a variety of other topics that could be used to present opinion pieces, compare/contrast, and persuasive language arts pieces. **Select videos, listed below, will be available for free without an Insider subscription in the month of November. Get a preview of all the great content available with an Insider School/Classroom subscription.**

- ["Rookie Veterinarian Excited for Opportunity" March 4, 2020 4:40 pm](#)**
- ["Returned Dogs and the Vets Who Care for Them", March 10, 2020 6:45 pm](#)**
- ["The Truth, parts 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5", Insider 2.0, August 20, 2020 9:35 am](#)**
- ["Martin Buser Speaks the Truth About Sled Dogs", August 20, 2020 2:47 pm](#)**
- ["Aliy Zirkle and Her Dogs", August 20, 2020 10:03 am](#)**
- ["Matt Failor and His Dog Foxy in Galena", March 14, 2020 4:02 pm](#)**

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.4 Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.9 Compare and contrast the most important points presented by two texts on the same topic.

Lesson Suggestion:

Use these video clips as well as written information in the "Dog Care" section of **Iditarod.com** as resources.

Primary Source of the Month

Jen Reiter

"How do they keep track of all of those dogs?" This is a common question asked by students. The answer depends, of course, on who is doing the tracking! Musher inevitably know every dog in their kennel better than most people know their families. But during the race, something more is needed. The dogs are tracked in two ways: microchips and collar tags. The collar tags are labeled with a roman numeral on one side representing the race year. The other side features a letter and number. The number is the starting position of the team, while the letter a letter used to designate each dog. The tag letter corresponds to the vet book which must be presented at each checkpoint. In this manner, the vets are able to share information about individual dogs in a team with each other.

Using the Source With Students



1. Share the source with your students and allow them time to investigate it on their own. Students could be asked to complete a See, Think, Wonder chart.
2. Have the students share with a partner or small group their observations, thoughts, and questions
3. Discuss as a group: This is an Iditarod dog collar tag turned into a piece of wearable art by musher Monica Zappa. The tag is from one of her Iditarod races and was sold as a fundraiser for subsequent races. Discuss why tags like this may become collectors' items.
4. No dogs on the team are assigned letters I or O. Why? (They look like numbers, so it gets too confusing.)
5. Dogs are also tracked by microchip. Do any students have pets that are microchipped? Why might people choose to do microchip their pets?
6. As a follow up, students could design a new collar tag for the race. What design would they like to see that is both attractive and functional?

Associated Resources:

- DeeDee Jonrowe's Dog Tag at the Smithsonian: [Here](#)
- How Does Iditarod Keep Track of the Dogs: [Here](#)

Extension Activities:

- Recreate a set of team dog tags on paper tags for younger kids to practice putting in numeric or alphabetical order.
- Create a set of dog tags on paper tags for older students to practice ordering Roman Numerals.

Virtual Learning With Husky Homeroom: Part 2

by: Terrie Hanke

Aliy Zirkle of SP Kennel has now posted five lessons in Husky Homeroom. Aliy is an enthusiastic teacher and her canine teaching assistants are very happy helpers. The explanations Aliy offers during the lessons are easy to follow. Her examples create clear pictures of the concepts she is sharing. Here are mini Socratic summaries of each lesson. Pick a topic that's of particular interest and watch the 20-minute lesson at spkennel.com or watch them all and share them with your students. Be sure to watch the supporting video clips. They are humorous AND informative. Dogs are really amazing. Aliy helps us appreciate their physical traits through the virtual lessons of SP Kennel's Husky Homeroom. Don't miss a single virtual lesson from Husky Homeroom. Aliy posts a new lesson on Monday and previous lessons are available to view as you have time. Guaranteed you'll fall in love with Aliy's teaching style as well as her very enthusiastic assistants. You'll come away knowing a lot more about dogs and humans than when you started. Have fun!

Lesson 1 - Science and Dog Anatomy

Violet and Nomex are on hand (paw) to help Aliy compare a dog's anatomy or body structure to a human's anatomy. In what ways are dogs and humans alike? How has the anatomy of the sled dog evolved or changed over time? What change took place in dogs due to needing speed to survive?

Lesson 2 - Science and Body Temperature

With the help of Decaf and Amber, Aliy shares information on body temperature. Did you know that humans and dogs have different ranges of normal body temperature? Do you know how our bodies create heat? Do you know how our bodies regulate temperature? What does having a "fever" mean?

Lesson 3 - Alaska Geography

In this lesson, Scout, Nacho and Aliy lead viewers on a study of Alaska geography. What do maps and globes tell us? Find out how many miles Scout and Nacho have raced in their combined careers and compare that to the distance around the earth at the equator. How does latitude and longitude help us find specific locations? Lastly, Aliy takes viewers on a tour of some really groovy places in Alaska by dog team.

Lesson 4 - What's That Smell?

Sparky and Cloud lend their noses as Aliy explains the amazing sense of smell a dog has. What are the parts of the olfactory system? Who has a better sense of smell, dogs or humans and why? Why is moisture important for a dog's nose? What do scent receptors do? Why do dogs sniff at everything? What does it mean that dogs sniff in 3D? Can a dog smell the passage of time?

Lesson 5 - Nutrition 1

Dogs Chipper and Driver pitch in as Aliy shares the first of a series of lessons on nutrition. How are dogs fit enough to run and race? How does the food we eat contribute to being healthy and happy? What are the six nutrients that are essential to a healthy happy body? Does food equal fuel? How does a dog drink? What food should a husky eat? How much should a husky eat? What is a calorie? What is a calorie master plan? How is a premium dog food created?

Find all the Husky Homeroom Lessons at SP Kennel: <https://spkennel.com/husky-homeroom/>



Aliy in the Ceremonial Start of Iditarod/ photo: Terrie Hanke

If You "Mush" Know...

We are excited to debut our new Q&A column with this editor. If you or your students have a mushing or Iditarod related question, send them our way! We have a team of mushers and educators ready to fill you in! Send your questions to jenreiter2014@gmail.com

A Question From a Race Fan:

*"How do sled dogs find their way?
If a team happens to be a trailbreaker,
do they use scent to find their way?"*

The Nose Knows the Way:



Top: Trail Markers
Right: Orchid
photos: Terrie Hanke



Thanks for your question. Scent is certainly one way a sled dog can follow the trail. But before we talk specifically about how sled dogs find their way, let's talk about the trail.

The route from Willow to Nome is a multi-use winter trail. Iditarod mushers aren't the only users. Once the rivers and other bodies of water freeze and snow falls, snow machiners take to the trail. You'll also find skiers, bikers and hikers on the trail. Mushers use the route for training runs. Other races follow parts of the route. Even the great Iron Dog Snowmobile Race follows part of the trail. Long and short, with all that use the trail is a snow covered, hard packed super highway. Keep in mind the "hard packed" part.

There are some parts of the trail that are less travelled or not travelled at all. The trail needs to be put in or sections may need grooming and maintenance. The trail over Rainy Pass and through the Dalzell Gorge is one of those sections. Iditarod sends a trail crew out to set the trail, clear fallen brush, cut saplings and build the ice bridges that mushers use to cross from side to side of the Dalzell.

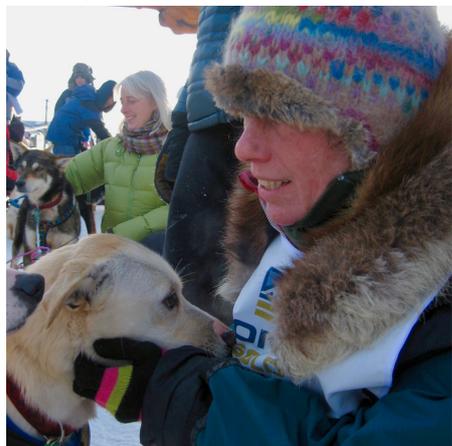
Trial breakers on wide track snow machines break trail ahead of the field of mushers. Not only do they break trails, but they also mark the trail with thousands of lath stakes that have reflective tape and an orange top. There are 12,000 lath markers standing upright along the trail and they are visible in all but the worst conditions.

What might the worst conditions be? Extreme wind can blow the markers over. Ground blizzards creating white out conditions can prevent mushers from seeing the trail markers until being nearly next to one. This is where mushers trust their lead dogs to do the things great leaders do – keep the team on the trail and going in the right direction. How do they do it?

Time and time again, at the finish line in Nome I've heard mushers praise a great leader for finding the trail when it was humanly impossible to see the trail or trail markers. Ground blizzards commonly reduce visibility along the trail but the blowhole between the Topkok Hills and the Safety checkpoint is most famous and consistent for white out conditions.

Jodi Bailey is one of the mushers who profoundly thanked her leader, Orchid, at the finish line in Nome. Going through the blowhole, Bailey was hit by fierce winds reducing visibility to no more than 10 feet. Bailey could only see the pair of wheel dogs just in front of the sled. Yet little Miss Orchid, her tried, true and trusted leader stayed on the trail, led the team out of the blowhole and onto Nome.

In 2014 Aliy Zirkle experienced horrific winds and whiteout conditions coming into Safety. Aliy's leader, Quito, found the trail with her nose. Aliy says, "Quito found her way to Safety, I held onto the sled and the rest of the team had enough faith in both of us to go along with that idea."



Orchid and Quito undoubtedly called upon the sense of smell to stay on the trail. A dog's sense of smell is 10,000 to 100,000 times better than a human's sense of smell. Humans rely on vision to navigate the trail, but dogs rely on scent. The nose knows the way! Orchid and Quito also used the sense of feel to find the way out of the blowhole. Through their feet they sensed the firmness of the "hard packed" trail.

For an explanation of the exceptional olfactory powers of dogs, I suggest checking out Husky Homeroom at spkennel.com. Aliy Zirkle has created a 20-minute video explaining the parts of the canine olfactory system, how it works and why it's superior to that of a human. Zirkle explains that dogs actually sniff in 3D and they can smell the passage of time. How might that help a dog sniff its way toward Nome?

~Terrie Hanke

2020 EDU Fall Virtual Conference Wrap Up

Linda Fenton

Teachers representing many states spent a few hours at the October 16 & 17 Iditarod 2020 Fall Virtual Conference. With the focus of keeping up with technology and recent changes in Iditarod EDU, presenters shared ideas, activities, and lessons for the 2021 Iditarod.

Chas St. George opened the Friday evening Fireside Chat with an upcoming addition to Iditarod EDU, the Iditaread. In a nutshell, teachers will be able to log in to an Iditarod trail map to post student reading goals. Students will virtually walk the trail from Anchorage to Nome as their goals are met. The idea is to motivate students to read both at school and beyond the classroom. Watch for this exciting new feature on the Iditarod Education website.

I think most of us will agree that the highlight of this conference was a visit from Aliy Zirkle. Aliy is an amazing musher who will attempt her 21st Iditarod in 2021. She shared stories from her kennel and adventures from the trail. She also shared her new education program, Husky Homeroom. (<https://spkennel.com/husky-homeroom/>) If you haven't had a chance to visit this site, please take the time to do so. Aliy is an inspiration to teachers and students alike and it was a pleasure to have her be a part of our weekend.

We came together from different time zones as teachers who know the power of Iditarod Education. Thank you to all of the past Teachers on the Trail for taking the time to inspire and share. If you would like to order a recording of this conference contact Chas St. George at chas.stgeorge@iditarod.com.

Mark Your Calendar

November 30, 2020, midnight: Last Day to Sign Up for the 2021 Iditarod Race

December 1, 2020: [Applications for 2022 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail Due](#)

March 6, 2021, 10am: Iditarod Start

March 7, 2021, 2pm: Iditarod ReStart



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