

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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Photo: Jen Reiter

## Back at the Starting Line

BY JEN REITER

Here we are at the starting line of yet another school year... and belly deep into planning for the 50th running of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race!

The statue above is frequently incorrectly referred to as the "Balto" statue and marks the starting line for the Iditarod. But as the plaque states, it is meant to commemorate all the great sled dogs: "Each winter the city of Anchorage, Alaska is host to two of the world's greatest sled dog races, the Fur Rendezvous World Championship and the Iditarod. This is the starting line for these two great races. This monument is dedicated to all dog mushers and their heroic dogs."

Read on to learn about the special programs we are working on for this school year. We are especially thrilled to announce our new Iditarod Certified Educator (I.C.E) program! We hope you'll consider joining our inaugural cohort which will be offered as an add-on to our Winter Conference for Educators! We hope to see you at the starting line for the 50th Iditarod!

As we start our second year of newsletter publications, please send your ideas, requests, questions, or feedback to [jen.reiter@iditarod.com](mailto:jen.reiter@iditarod.com)



# September Teaching Ideas

BY: HEIDI SLOAN

Photo above: Ann Swinehart's Third Grade Classroom

**Procedures:** Need some fresh ideas to incorporate the Iditarod into your start to the school year? How about training your young students in hallway procedures? Read this lesson plan for some ideas to create classroom jobs that assist in this habit training.

- [Download Lesson Plan: Hike! \(PDF\)](#)
- [Download Lesson Supplement: Husky Stencil \(PDF\)](#)

**Character Traits:** A beginning of the year activity follows in which students compare character traits in dogs, classmates, and themselves. Encourage character education with this activity!

[Students, Dogs, Character](#)

**Book Lists:** A solid way to incorporate the Iditarod from the beginning of the school year is to read books aloud to students or to have an Iditarod section within your classroom library. Find good books from these primary lists: [Fiction](#) [Nonfiction](#)

**Trading Cards:** Though we teachers often have our students choose mushers later in the school year, it is an exciting activity that could be completed sooner rather than later! Some mushers will write back to students if the letters are sent prior to their busy season (before January). It may be a writing and research activity to try earlier in the school year and build upon up until the race! Check out this lesson on how students can research mushers and create trading cards. And look later in the newsletter for information on writing to mushers!

[Trading Cards Lesson](#)

## Beg for It!

Here is a photo to share with your students for a quick write activity. What is the dog in the photo asking for? Have the students write a paragraph from the point of view of the dog trying to convince his musher for his special request! Click the photo for a larger image.

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"Dogs have a lot to communicate to a person willing to listen."

~Susan Butcher

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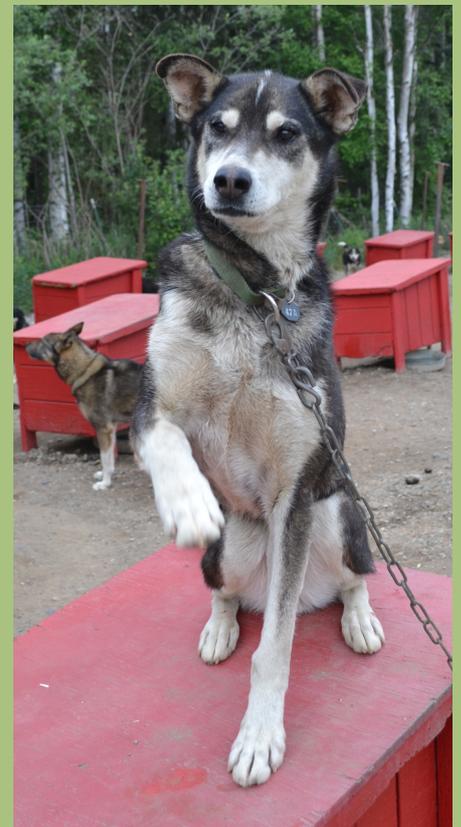


Photo: Jen Reiter

# 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 Teacher on the Trail Posts

Jim Deprez,  
2021/2022 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail

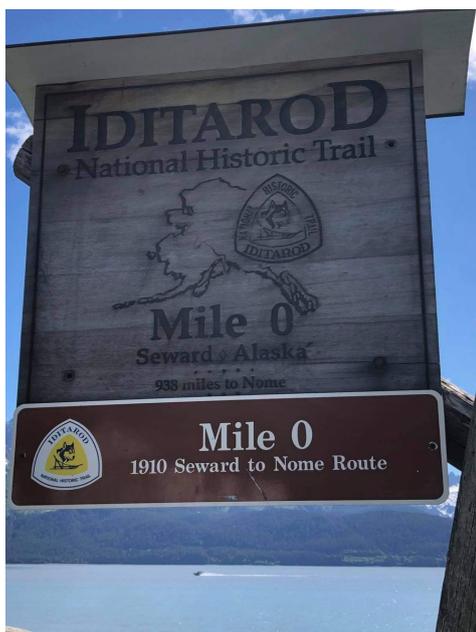


September. The dog days of summer are winding down and everyone is gearing up for welcoming a new classroom of students. Teachers are busy setting up classrooms, bulletin boards, seating charts, and making their classrooms their own. The goal of this pre-first-day preparation is to set a new group of learners up for success, to make them feel welcome, and to know what to expect on day one. Along those same lines, I wanted you all to know what to expect from me this year.

As you can remember from last year, due to Covid, I reported on the race updates from my classroom, with my students as classroom reporters. This year, however, I fully anticipate being on the trail in person, in order to provide everyone with live updates from the checkpoints. I am thrilled to be in Alaska for the 50th running of the Iditarod, and cannot wait to share that experience with all of you.

In terms of my posts, I will be alternating on the 15th of each month between 2 of my themes from last year. I will begin with a "Misconceptions and More" piece this month and then rotate to a "Classroom Connections" piece the following month. This will continue for the entire school year. For the first installment, you can expect to learn more about the start of the race itself. More specifically, why the race starts in Anchorage as opposed to the actual beginning of the trail in Seward. I learned a lot in researching and writing this post, and I hope you will as well!

On the 30th of each month, I will be sharing a new series entitled "Voices of the Volunteers". For those who have followed the race for a long time already know, the Iditarod would not even be possible without the help of the volunteers. Therefore, I have decided to do this piece as an homage to all of the volunteers over the years, for without whom, we would never have made it to the 50th running of the "Last Great Race on Earth". In this monthly article, I will share with you some stories from the faithful volunteers and their time on the trail, but also get to know who they are as individuals, what got them involved in Iditarod in the first place, and what drives them to return. These volunteers cover many facets of the race and will include Iditarod Air Force (IAF) pilots, communications workers, veterinarians, checkpoint checkers, and one familiar face and name that will be kicking off this piece at the end of the month. Be sure to check in on the 30th for this!



Left: Mile Marker 0 of the Iditarod Trail

Right: Iditarod Trail Near Seward

Photos:  
Sara Lamont

## K9 ReporterCorner

by: Zuma

## Meet Your K9 Reporters



Hello friends! The dog days of summer are behind us, and we look forward to the new school year. The K9 reporters and their human Iditarod Education partners are well-rested and excited to be back.

K9 reporter Sled Dog Ed is back on the education trail this year for the 50th Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race! He will be sharing ideas for educators on how to integrate the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race into their classrooms in all curricular areas. The intended audience of Sled Dog Ed's articles is educators, administrators, and curriculum coordinators working with children of all ages. Together, he encourages you to mush forward into a "golden" year of exciting adventures!

Next is Sanka. Sanka writes for students of all ages and teachers of all curriculum areas from character development (8 Traits of Iditarod) to book reviews (check out **Togo and Leonhard** by Pam Flowers). Sanka's stories and lessons are based on her handler's nearly 20 years of experience as a Teacher on the Trail, Iditarod Trail Volunteer, and Eye on the Trail Photojournalist. Sanka's project for the 2021-22 school year is a Virtual Trail Journey. She will have posts highlighting the checkpoints on the Iditarod Trail's Northern Route. Check Sanka's column often for lesson ideas, checkpoint information, and character development activities.

Gypsy is a dog who loves the Iditarod! Read Gypsy's column to learn about the race and get the inside scoop on what's happening. All ages will enjoy Gypsy's posts.

Every team needs a pup, and we have Libby Littles. Libby writes for lower elementary students bringing the race into the classroom. Join her celebration of the 2022 Iditarod.

Finally, me - Zuma. I will keep you posted on what's happening as we head into the 50th Iditarod. I LOVE hearing from students all around the world and base my posts on questions that have been sent to me. I keep my ears perked up and my nose to the ground as I look for information about the race.

We have a saying here at Iditarod HQ, "It's all about the dogs". This pack of dogs is ready to bring the Iditarod to your classroom. Check us out at [Meet the K9 Journalist Team](#).

Tail wags!



# Teaching with the First Ten Years

by: Jane Holmes

Welcome back to a new school year! The 2022 race is the 50th running of the Iditarod. The anthology, **Iditarod: The First Ten Years**, was compiled to preserve the stories of those who launched The Last Great Race. The goal of the Old Iditarod Gang was to have this book for classrooms to use as a resource in their study of the Iditarod.

Each month's newsletter will include a lesson plan based on a part of **The First Ten Years**. Use these lessons right away to get your students engaged and excited about the Iditarod and well versed in its history.

A description of the book can be found [here](#).

If you are an educator, you can purchase the book for \$30 plus flat rate shipping in the U.S. (International shipping is not available at this time.)

Email Jane Holmes at [jane.holmes@iditarod.com](mailto:jane.holmes@iditarod.com) for more information.

The first lessons come from Heidi Sloan, 2018 Teacher on the Trail.

## [Changing Checkpoints](#)

- Grade level 4 – 6, Reading, Compare/Contrast
- Students will read an article then compare and contrast checkpoints from past and present.

## [Embarrassing Moments](#)

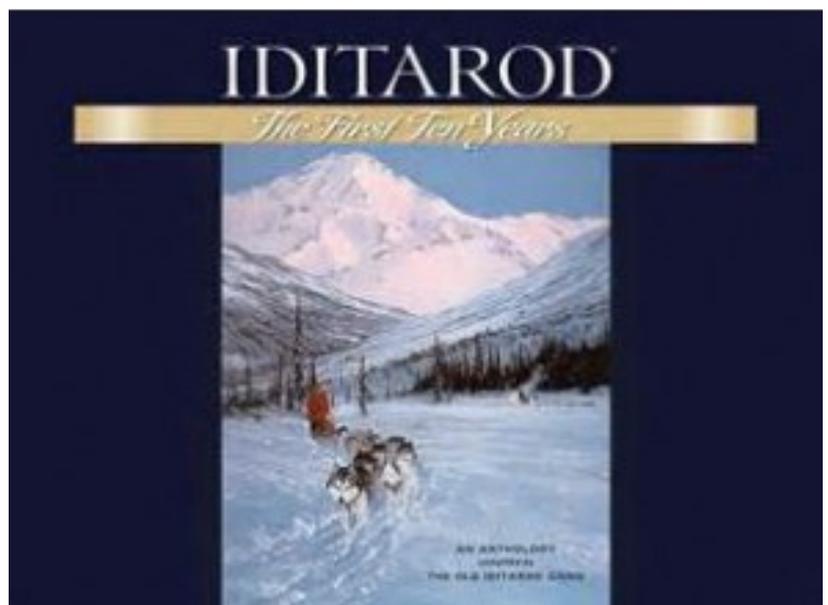
- Grade level 6th – 10th, Reading, Writing, Social/Emotional Development, Empathy, Self – Analysis
- Students read an article about an embarrassing Iditarod moment and make connections with a possible moment of their own.

## [Joe Redington's Dog "Feets"](#)

- Grade level 4th – 6th, Math, Problem Solving
- Students will solve math problems based on a story about events in the life of Feets, a dog belonging to Joe Redington, Sr.

## [Joe Redington's dog "Feets" pt. 2](#)

- Grade level K, 1 or 3rd – 6th, Reading, Comprehension strategy of sequencing
- Students will read various articles (or have articles read to them) about the dog, Feets, and create a sequential timeline of highlights of the dog's life.



# If You "Mush" Know...

by: Lynne Witte

This month's question comes from.....

**Teddy**

**What does it mean when mushers say they are in "fall training?"**

## Time to Harness Up and Train

A chill is in the morning air, fog swirls as the morning sun rises, and an extra bounce is in the dogs as they sense the change in seasons. It is fall, and time to train.

There is a freedom to the dogs as they can unleash their stored energy and run! There have been many hot summer days, too hot for anything but a free run to a lake, river, or creek.

Fall training is a slow build-up of short distances, gently working the dogs back into physical condition. It's a time for the pups who were harness broken in the spring to run next to mature team members and learn from them.

Fall is time to train routines, manners, and leaders. using an ATV. In fall training, the ATV provides the musher the ability to control the speed of the dogs, and to safely stop, in order to carefully train the dogs' muscle development. You can train and reward leaders and work on teaching the dogs to stop and wait without chewing equipment or hammering to go. It takes many miles and hundreds of hookups to have a team ready for a race start line.

With frost on the ground, cold on my cheeks, and the sight of the dogs' breaths in the air - I know these dogs are at their happiest. Time to harness up and train!



Fall Training Pictures courtesy of Jaye Foucher of Sibersong Kennel. Jaye recently moved to Alaska to train for the 2022 Iditarod!

# Primary Source of the Month

By: Jen Reiter

Welcome back to another year exploring Iditarod Themed Primary Sources. Using historic photos and objects is a wonderful way to have students use critical thinking and observation skills as they try to understand what they are seeing and what it can teach us about history. In honor of the 50th running of the race, each month we will feature a photo from a different decade of the race! This month's photo is from the very first Iditarod - 1973.



Click photo for a larger image.

## Using the Source With Students

1. Display the photo for the students and have them share what they See, Think, and Wonder about the artifact.
2. The two mushers on the sled give away the date of this photo - 1973. The first year was the only year that the rules allowed two mushers per team. This photo is of Robert and Owen Ivan of Akiak at the start. They went on to finish in 16th place. The only other 2-man team entry scratched, making these two the only two mushers to have finished the Iditarod as part of a 2-man team!
3. Rule #9 of the original rules stated: "Two mushers may drive one team, provided that both mushers cover the entire distance either on the sled or on foot. Both mushers of a two-man team must pay the \$100.00 entry fee." Have students skim through the [2022 Rules](#) to see where this is addressed in today's rules.
4. Discuss with the students their ideas on why they think the rules have changed to disallow 2-man teams. Do they think that 2-man teams should be reinstated?
5. As a follow-up, have the students answer one of the following prompts:
  - a. Do you think 2-man teams should be allowed in the 2022 Iditarod? Write a letter to the ITC Rules Committee stating your opinion about whether or not 2-man teams should be allowed to run this year's Iditarod. Be sure to support your opinion.
  - b. If you had to choose a human teammate to run the Iditarod with, who would you choose and why?

### Associated Resources:

- [Musher Career Summary](#)
- Photo included in **Iditarod: The First Ten Years** compiled by The Old Iditarod Gang. Originally published by the Anchorage Daily News.

## Descriptive Writing Inspired by Hudson Stuck

By: Terrie Hanke, 2006 Teacher on the Trail and Eye on the Trail Journalist

**Hudson Stuck's Ten Thousand Miles With A Dog Sled** has been on my "to-read list" for quite some time. Stuck was an Episcopal Priest who served the scattered population of the Yukon River Valley in Alaska. He traveled by dogsled, by boat, and on foot covering 1500 to 2000 miles every year. Ten thousand miles is a long-distance, taking well more than five winters. Travel in the early 1900s was without the advanced equipment mushers of today use. His journey is astounding, and his writing is engaging. He painted pictures with words so thoroughly, at times I felt I was mushing with him.

All 413 pages of his book, originally published in 1914, are filled with descriptions that made me enjoy the northern lights, love his dogs as he did, appreciate the people he ministered to, be awed by the perils of winter travel, and admire the incredible beauty that caused him to embrace his travels as the Archdeacon of the Yukon.

His vivid descriptions made me think of children and the process of descriptive writing. I'm providing an abbreviated version of Stuck's description of the Malamute dog from **Ten Thousand Miles with a Dog Sled** for you to share with your students. Discussion can follow as to why Stuck's description paints such a vivid picture for the reader about the Malamute as a sled dog.

*From chapter XIV – The Alaska Dogs*

*Stuck wrote, "There was never animal better adapted to environment than the malamute dog. His coat, while it is not fluffy, nor the hair long, is yet so dense and heavy that it affords him a perfect protection against the utmost severity of cold. His feet are tough and clean, and do not readily accumulate snow between the toes and therefore do not easily get sore. His prick ears, always erect, his bushy graceful tail, carried high, his coat of silver-grey, his sharp muzzle and black nose and quick narrow eyes give him an air of keenness and alertness. The Malamute is affectionate and faithful and likes to be made a pet of. He is a ceaseless and tireless worker who loves to pull."*

Now comes the challenge for the students. Write about a pet you have known or dream of owning, offering a detailed description so the reader feels as if he or she also knows the pet. Use as many senses as possible in your description. How does the pet feel, look, sound and smell? How big, what color, tail, coat, legs, ears, eyes – oh there are so many features to describe. What physical characteristics make the pet unique? What does the pet do that is endearing? Paint a vivid picture with words as Hudson Stuck does.

Good luck and enjoy the challenge of descriptive writing.

Hudson Stuck photo is in the public domain in the US. Accessed via Wikimedia Commons.

[Portrait of Hudson Stuck](#)



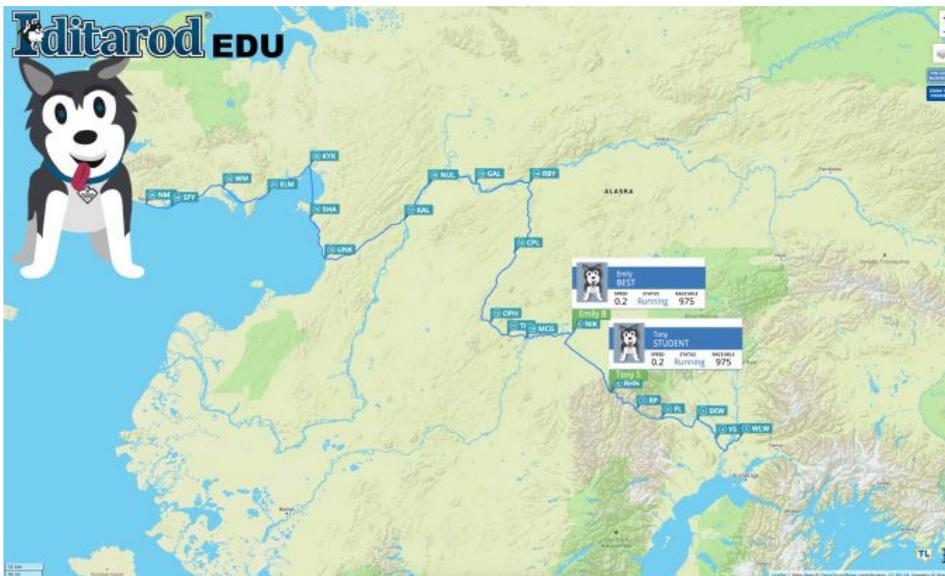
# Iditarod Back to School Basics

by: Jane Holmes

Start your students on the race route today!

Use these programs now to begin your Iditarod lessons and build knowledge and enthusiasm about the 50th Anniversary Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in March 2022.

**IditaRead Digital:** Set up your free account or login to last year's account and get your students started down the Iditarod Trail of reading. If you used it last year, you still have an account and v2.0 is about to be released. [IditaRead Information](#)



**Writing to Musers:** This program is back better than ever! Read about the project, and send an email to [Jane Holmes](#), Director of Education, to request a musher contact list for the 2022 race if you would like to participate.

[Writing to Musers Information](#)



**Musher Banquet Centerpiece Contest:** We are thrilled to once again have our Musher Banquet Centerpiece Contest. What an honor for your students to have a centerpiece on a table at the 50th Anniversary Banquet of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

[Centerpiece Information](#)

## Ready for the Next Level? Get Involved in These Opportunities!

by: Jen Reiter and Annie Kelley McGuire

**Iditarod Quilt Project 2021-2022:** The Iditarod Quilt Project is back for the 2021-2022 school year! This year there will be eight quilts traveling across the country from school to school. Each quilt is unique and teaches students all about the race– from inspirational quotes to character development, the quilts make a great addition to any Iditarod classroom! To register to receive a quilt this year, [click here](#) and if you have questions about the program, contact Annie at [iditarodquiltproject@gmail.com](mailto:iditarodquiltproject@gmail.com).



**Iditarod Postcard Project:** We are still looking for classes from Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, and West Virginia to participate in this year's Iditarod Postcard Exchange.

[Postcard Challenge Information](#)

**2022 Educational Trail Mail Art Contest and Project:** We are thrilled to announce the second year of our Educational Trail Mail Project! Once again, we will be sending classroom projects down the trail in envelopes featuring one student's amazing art. Students in grades 5-12 are invited to enter a piece of art in our contest to be featured on this year's Trail Mail. Classrooms will be given the opportunity to send a project down the trail with a musher. [Trail Mail Art Contest Information](#). Trail Mail sales for classroom projects will begin November 3rd. Watch for details in the November Newsletter.

**Become an Iditarod Certified Educator:** The Iditarod EDU Teacher Certification program is a four month long professional development program offered to preschool - high school teachers across the world. The program is divided into four checkpoints that combine synchronous and asynchronous course work for teachers. The first cohort will launch at the Winter 2021 Conference for Teachers in Anchorage, Alaska! The Introductory Checkpoint will be offered during the conference as an add-on for those interested in participating. [Certified Educator Information](#)

# Mark Your Calendar

September 1: 50th Anniversary Trail Mail Art Contest Opens  
November 1: Trail Mail Art Contest Entries Due  
November 3: Educational Trail Mail Sales Begin  
November 12: Banquet Centerpiece Entries Due  
December 1: Trail Mail Art Contest Winner Announced  
December 1: 2023 Teacher on the Trail Applications Due  
December 1: Centerpiece Winners Announced  
February 1: Educational Trail Mail Projects Due  
February 20: Final Centerpieces Due in Anchorage  
March 1- 4: Winter Conference for Educators - Anchorage  
March 5: Iditarod Start  
March 6: Iditarod Restart



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