

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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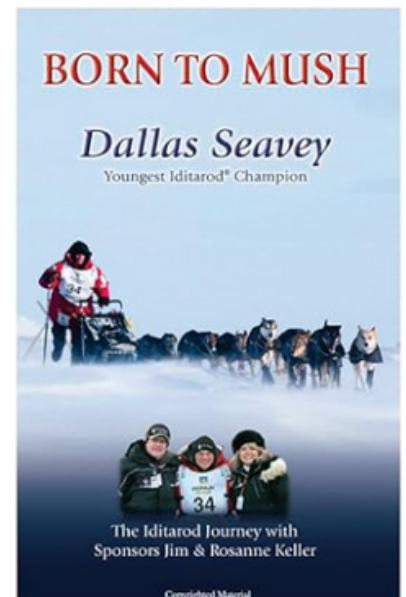
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### Book of the Month

**Born to Mush**  
By Dallas Seavey



Dallas Seavey has reached legendary status with his 2024 Iditarod. Finishing 1st place this year gave him his 6th win, making him the most winning musher in Iditarod history.

Seavey was 18 years old in 2005 when he raced his first Iditarod placing 51st and making him the youngest finisher. He became the youngest Iditarod Champion in 2012 at the age of 25.

From scooping poop (kids love this) when he was young, to being a High School Wrestling Champion, to becoming Iditarod Champion, students will love the story of how Dallas Seavey was truly *Born to Mush*.



## April Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

### Robotics and STEM

Ready for a project as the school year winds down? Try some robotics challenges that will engage your students for those end-of-the-year blahs during testing review. This project was created by 2014 Teacher on the Trail, Jen Reiter.

#### Robitarod

### Reading

I am sensing a theme in these lesson choices: end of the year blahs and determination. Kelly Villar, 2020 Teacher on the Trail, discusses determination and gives some ideas for motivational books involving the Iditarod. All of these could spruce up your students' motivation to finish strong.

#### Determination

### Morning Meeting

Introduce this article with the fun "untangle" game. Students get in groups of five or six, reach out hands, and grab the hands of two different people. They then have to untangle themselves without dropping hands! When finished, there should be a circle. (Note: depending upon space in your classroom, this might be a good outside activity). After students attempt the act of untangling a group, let them sit down and read about what can happen with sled dogs teams and how mushers untangle their dogs. This true life example was posted by 2013 Teacher on the Trail, Linda Fenton.

#### A Tangled Team

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Well, give me a team and a  
good lead dog  
And a sled that's built so  
fine.

And let me race those  
miles to Nome  
One thousand forty-nine;  
And when I get back to my  
home,  
Hey, I can tell my tale:  
I did I did I did the  
Iditarod Trail.

Iditarod Trail Song  
By "Hobo Jim" Varsus

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Hobo Jim sings  
The Iditarod Trail Song  
in 2021  
at the Mushers Banquet

# Meet A Sled Dog

by Kelly Villar

## Connor McMahon Meet Mama Mako...

Little Mako is the matriarch of the Feral Team, she has the biggest heart and a GPS for a brain which is why she's always running in lead. She's sassy and has the cutest butt wiggles when she's happy, and don't worry, she will tell you when she's not.

Mako runs alongside Grotto most of the time, and boy do these two remind me of my parents bickering on road trips as a kid.

Mama Mako also comes by her name quite honestly as her 3yr old pups still treat her like Mama and tug on her ears any chance they get.



**Mama Mako with  
Connor McMahon**



# What's In Kate's Sled Bag?

by Kate Newmyer



It's 70 degrees here in Houston but I'm still fresh from the snow and ice of the Iditarod Trail. My 2024 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™ experience was all that I could hope for and more. I have so many highlights but I'll give you a few...riding on a snowmachine on the Jr. Iditarod and getting to see what the mushers experience while they are on the trail...going into classrooms to talk about the Iditarod and sled dogs...flying in Iditarod Air Force planes from checkpoint to checkpoint, viewing racing teams from the air...meeting and talking to the hundreds of volunteers and locals who care so passionately about the race that they give up their free time to help...and so many more! Looking ahead to April, I will be sharing a lesson plan about insulation—an important scientific concept related to the Iditarod. In Classroom Culture I will be writing about ways you can use the idea of mandatory gear in your classroom. Astronauts also have mandatory gear—so I'll write about that similarity in “Houston, We Have a Connection.”

While I was in Alaska, I discovered some important nuggets that I want to share with you and your students. First, always be prepared--but then have patience. As I was traveling from one checkpoint to another, it was usually “hurry up and wait.” So I enjoyed the opportunity to talk with other people. You never know who you are going to meet. Second, I learned to talk with and get along with all kinds of other people. I got to know many volunteers of all ages and walks of life, local people, and musher teams. If we are open to these new connections, we can have much more meaningful experiences. Another lesson is, say yes to different opportunities. Because I said yes, I got to ride on a snowmachine to the Safety checkpoint, somewhere I really wanted to visit. I said yes to the invitation to go mushing in Nome and get on the runners and actually hold on! (I won't say I drove the sled--the dogs knew what they were doing without my help.) I said yes to a scenic flight to Ophir and getting dropped off in Takotna to walk a mile into town. Finally, I learned that even despite disappointment, you can change the narrative of your circumstances into a positive story. Musher Sean Williams, who I discovered is from the same area of Houston where I live, made his second attempt at being an Iditarod finisher this year. When he got to Golovin, his dogs decided they were done with racing, and though he tried to change their minds, they were finished. Josh's GPS tracker showed many back-and-forth movements, and everyone wondered what he was doing. It turns out that he was giving sled rides to the children of the village. Even though his race was over, Josh decided to change his story through generosity and fun. These are the amazing lessons I learned on the Iditarod Trail this year.

Lastly, I want to highlight Ellen Redington's wonderful books, *Wiley Wants to Win*, and *North to Nome*. Redington is a 15-year-old Jr. Iditarod finisher. She wrote, illustrated and published the books on her own. She writes about her sled dogs in a sweet, poetic style. Through the dogs' experiences we learn about the meaning of teamwork and perseverance. You can find Ellen Redington's books on Etsy.



Photo by Nancy Wendt

The Numbers Have It...

Teachers, let's give our students a chance to look at Alaska and the Iditarod Sled Dog Race through the eyes of "numbers". This idea came to me after seeing an article entitled, "Alaska at a Glance" from the magazine, Alaska, which my owner reads each month. The article chooses a specific topic each month relating to Alaska and lists various numbers with descriptions of how those numbers pertain to that chosen topic. So, let's choose the topic of "Iditarod and Alaska by the Numbers" for our students and encourage them to create a similar project.

The idea is to locate numbers relating to Alaska or the Iditarod race and give a brief summary of their significance. Students can find information on [Iditarod.com](http://Iditarod.com), books about the Iditarod or Alaska, internet searching, or the magazine, Alaska.

Numbers and descriptions can be displayed on a poster, in a digital format, word document, or whatever creative manner the student chooses. Students might even opt to add photos, pictures or their own artwork to the project. You can even extend the idea by using the information from students' work to create a trivia game within your classroom that could be done daily, before, during or after the race.

Here is a sample of some "numerical" ideas:

- \*12,000 rivers in Alaska
- \*94,722 square miles of water in Alaska
- \*1,982 miles is the length of the entire Yukon River
- \*1,400 miles of the Yukon River is in Alaska
- \*702 miles is the length of The Kuskokwim River; longest river entirely in Alaska
- \*43 mushers originally signed up for 2024 race
- \*964 miles is the distance from Willow to Nome
- \*\$4,000 entry fee for 2024 race
- \*40 hours total mandatory rest time for a musher and dogs
- \*16 dogs is the maximum number to start the race
- \*53 rules that mushers must follow to run the Iditarod Sled Dog Race
- \*23 checkpoints on the Northern Route
- \*March 3, 1973 was the first Iditarod race to Nome
- \*78 is the largest number of mushers to finish a single race; happened in 2008
- \*5 Alaskan natives have won the Iditarod

Have fun uncovering the numbers associated with Alaska and the Iditarod Sled Dog Race! The possibilities are endless as long as your students are willing to research and dig for numerical treasures.

# Congratulations Dallas Seavey!



For information about all the award winners click [here](#).

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

**June 13-15: Summer Iditarod Educators Conference in McCall, Idaho**  
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