

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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Photo: Jen Reiter

## Sliding into Summer

BY JEN REITER

It's hard to believe that this challenging year is coming to a rapid end. We here at Iditarod Education would like to take a moment to congratulate your finishing what is likely one of the most challenging years of your teaching career, and to thank you for all you have done for your students. We hope that you were able to find some joy in the year, and that you will take the summer to lounge, recuperate, and reenergize like Lisbet Norris' dog is doing above!

This will be our last newsletter for the academic year. We'll roll back into your inbox with our September issue. We'd love to hear your feedback on this year's newsletter, and what you'd like to see next year. Please send your feedback to [jen.reiter@iditarod.com](mailto:jen.reiter@iditarod.com)

This summer, be sure to keep checking <https://iditarod.com/edu/> as we'll be featuring a special series where some of our former Teachers on the Trail will share their favorite moments from the trail! Speaking of Teacher on the Trail, have you thought of applying? Summer is a great time to start to work on your [application!](#)



## May Teaching Ideas

HEIDI SLOAN

Since the mushers missed out on visiting with the **Alaska Native people** in the interior communities this year, **this activity** will give your students insights into the cultural regions of Alaska through a museum project. They will be prepared for next year! [The link in the lesson plan is no longer valid, but we'd like to offer this one:

<https://www.alaskanative.net/cultural-knowledge/> ]

Are you building a collection of Iditarod books? **Here is a listing** of many books having to do with the Iditarod, mushing, and sled dogs for all ages and reading levels!

Incorporating technology with content subjects is always a benefit to our students in the 21st century. This lesson blends geography with winter sports along with technology! Did you know one of the mushers who has raced is from the tropical island of Jamaica? **Check out this lesson!**

In **this lesson** your students will create a playlist for the Iditarod. They will choose music based on its lyrics and/or feelings the music conveys. They will choose 5 different songs which match up with 5 different checkpoints along the race. Students will also explain why they chose each song in their playlist.

### Describe It!

Many classes use writing time in the spring to delve into poetry, which frequently depends on figurative language to describe objects in meaningful ways. Challenge your students to describe the dog to the right using smilies, metaphors, hyperbole, personification, alliteration, or any other type of figurative language you have been exploring in your classroom!

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"I think dogs are the most amazing creatures, they give unconditional love. For me, they are the role model for being alive."

~Gilda Radner

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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

May is finally here. For some of us, this marks the last month of school in a year that was unlike any other. There are some districts who will continue their school year into June, and for that reason I will have my final post for the 2021 school year NEXT month on the 15th. But, for me, May will bring closure to this year's installments of my "Classroom Connections" pieces. So, with this, I will be sharing one of my favorite summative activities that my classes have always loved to do at the end of the year to sort of wrap up the whole Iditarod experience and see what they really remember.

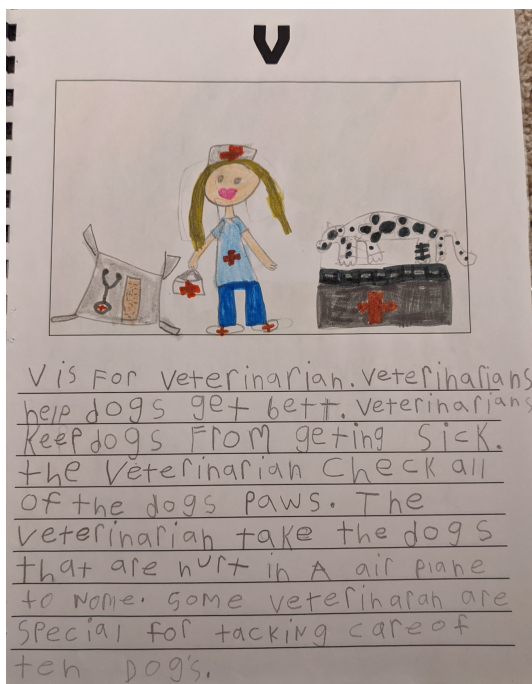
### Moments With Musher: Who Do You Look Up To In Mushing?

Every May in my classroom, I have my students create a book of poetry for their moms for Mother's Day. The students all talk about how much they love their moms and thank them for helping them with everything.

This reminded me about how much the mushers help each other during the race. Then I began to wonder about who they might look up to in the world of mushing. Most mushers learned from someone who has been at it for a while, or got some pointers from someone along the way. There were some very interesting responses from a number of mushers. Be sure to check back on the 15th for their answers to this question.



Calvin Daugherty getting advice before the start of the Jr. Iditarod from Jim Lanier.  
Photo Credit: Terrie Hanke



### Classroom Connections: Iditarod Encyclopedia

This lesson is kind of a twist on an activity that I have found past Teachers on the Trail do. Annie Kelly had a similar lesson with her "Iditarod Alphabet". I have taken this idea and turned it into an activity for the students to do a quick research project with. Usually in my classes, I have had about 24 students each year. Each student chooses a letter at random that will start the word, term, or phrase they would like to add to the encyclopedia each year. It is a fun project that can be added to each year to get a more comprehensive overview of the race and it's parts. The students' favorite part is always the illustrating they get to do at the end. Check out this final lesson of the year on the 30th of May!

# “Change...Inevitable...Persevere”

by Sled Dog Ed

Dear Teachers,

In the 2021 Iditarod Pre Race Video, Greg Heister from Iditarod Insider used the following quote to introduce this year’s Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race:

“If we fail to adapt, we fail to move forward.”  
(Jack Wooden, former UCLA basketball coach)



The world has been in a state of flux over the past year as it dealt with a pandemic that ultimately changed every aspect of our lives. The pandemic brought with it a whole host of concerns and problems. Families endured separation, social gatherings were non-existent, schools were closed and online learning became the mode, jobs were affected, and much more. But through it all, people learned to adapt and move forward, sometimes one step at a time, but perhaps stronger for their efforts. Small steps were taken and now the world is moving forward again to a possible return to normalcy.

Throughout the COVID pandemic, the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race realized that in order to have a race that would be safe for all, change was inevitable. Race leaders decided to persevere and devise a plan. They chose to move forward and provide an alternative trail and safety measures that would continue to celebrate the world of dogsledding. This year’s race was a success!

Change can often be scary as it evokes a feeling of the “unknown”. Have your students think about the mushers heading out on a different trail (going out to Iditarod, turning around, and coming back on that same trail). What might be going through their minds? For the rookies, they had never been on this course so it was all new to them, but for the veterans, they knew what lay ahead of them. However, veterans had not experienced a return trip before on that same trail! Now instead of just descending into the gorge, they would also have to ascend it. Instead of passing the Steps once, it would be done again. The Burn and Buffalo Tunnels would be travelled twice. While traveling on the return, they would meet other teams “head on”. Run/rest schedules would not be like they “used to be”, and the weather would be completely different on the return trip.

Weather did change on the mushers. Earlier parts of the trail had warmer weather and little snow. That switched when many experienced the fifty below zero degrees from Ophir to Iditarod and deeper snow. Fingers freezing, camping out was uncomfortable, and toes needing warming on a cooker were all obstacles that mushers needed to adapt to and persevere through.

Maintaining the health and safety of everyone on the trail was a huge concern that needed to be addressed. Adaptations were made so the race could move forward. The amount of spectators during this year’s race was very limited. The Ceremonial Start was cancelled, and the restart only allowed designated individuals to attend. Usually villages on the trail would be filled with people cheering on the mushers, talking with them, making food for them and children coming out to greet the mushers and dogs. But due to COVID, all of this was decreased. Mushers many times did not even go into the native villages as race officials wanted to temporarily avoid vulnerable populations for their safety. Mushers were COVID tested multiple times along the trail. The number of volunteers working was limited as well, and everyone was expected to wear a mask. What a change from previous years! But, in order to maintain a healthy race, change was inevitable, and the teams persevered. The 49th Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race adapted and moved forward.

Capitalizing upon the idea of changing, adapting and moving forward, pose the following questions to your students for discussion:

1. What changes and adaptations have you made this past school year?
2. What changes and adaptations did the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race make this year?
3. How did the change of trail affect the mushers?  
(strategies, run/rest schedules, types of sleds used, how/where to recharge electronic devices, etc.)
4. How did the change of your “academic trail” affect you?

5. Bonus questions to interject during your discussion:

How many different starting locations have there been for the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race?

(Answer: 5 - Anchorage, Wasilla, Willow, Fairbanks and Deshka Landing)

Did anyone notice a change regarding the Widow's Lamp which usually hangs on the Burlled Arch?

(Since there was no Burlled Arch, the Widow's Lamp was not hanging at the finish line, but the Red Lantern was handed to the last musher to extinguish after crossing the line.)

Compare and contrast the answers to questions 1– 4. Focus on any similarities regarding new ways of learning, different ways of doing things or attitudes for accomplishing a task.

This whole past year has been an enormous change in all lifestyles and activities. Have your students use one of the quotes listed below, or find one of their own, centering around the idea of change, adapting and moving forward. Have them explain how the quote relates to their lives this past year and the 2021 Iditarod.

Using photography or videography, challenge your students to find a picture/video or make a video depicting their interpretation of the quote as it relates to them and/or the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race 2021. Make sure students cite all sources correctly.

**Possible Quotes for Students to Use**

"You don't have to have it all figured out to move forward...just take the next step."

Unknown

"I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."

Jimmy Dean (American Singer)

"The way I look at it, every day that I am moving forward is a day I'm not moving backward."

Bobby Bones (Radio Personality)

"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop."

Confucius

"Enjoy the journey. Embrace the detours."

Benedict Cumberbatch (Actor)

I am hoping that you and your students continue to move forward in making your academic year a success. Your "finish line" is close. As Greg Heister from Iditarod Insider shared, "Forward is the only direction these dogs have ever known." Encourage your students to embrace change, adapt, persevere and continue to move forward in their lives.

~Sled Dog Ed



Red Lantern Winners: Magnus Kaltenborn (2018), Mary Helwig (2016), Marcelle Fressineau (2014), and Christine Roalofs (2013)  
Photos: Terrie Hanke

# IditaRead Digital: The Last Great Reading Race Reaches over 21,000 Students

by: Jane Holmes

On February 7, the Iditarod Education Department launched the new digital version of a favorite Iditarod classroom activity, an Iditaread. Embracing technology and realizing the need for virtual and digital tools for learning, the education department and our technology partners developed version 1 of the IditaRead Digital. And you, our Iditarod teachers, responded immediately and with the enthusiasm of a dog team lunging into their harnesses at the start line. Over 500 teachers registered to reach over 21,000 students!

Here are some projects teachers shared on how their students mused to the finish line. From finisher's banquets to awards ceremonies and simply motivating students to read - IditaRead was invaluable in motivating students to read, read, and read some more, and it gave teachers a way to track assignments and collect data on their readers.

From Beth Herden at the Boys and Girls Club of Central Wyoming:

***This year, the Lincoln Branch of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Wyoming participated in the online Iditaread. Our Club specializes in grades K-2 but all members up through age 12 are welcomed. The Iditaread was so much fun for our members! We follow the path of the mushers during the Iditarod each year. This year was extra special because our members who participated in the Iditaread got to watch their names progress through the very same trail that the mushers were on. Our Iditaread was set up just for reading this year- a skill that we struggle with at our Club. For every 10 minutes the members read, they moved to the next checkpoint. If they reached the halfway point, they got a small prize. If they finished, they received the Finisher's Certificate and earned a big prize. It was incredibly heart-warming to see our members, some of whom do not like reading, ask if they could read. Many of our members read up to 30-40 minutes each afternoon! They read traditional books, they read online, they read alone, and they read to each other. Christopher H., age 8, said, "I liked doing the Iditaread because I learned so much from all the books!" Jake L., age 6, loved reading along with the books on Storyline Online because, "I like how the pictures move during the story." Our Club read a total of 1,810 minutes and 14 Club members finished the Iditaread. This was such a great experience and a huge success at our Club. We will definitely be using the Iditaread digital tool in the future!***

From Mary Bohringer of the West Side Elementary:

***During the month of March the West Side students were busy learning about the Iditarod Dog Sled Race. A 975 mile dog sled race that takes place in Alaska the first Saturday in March. There were a lot of surprising things that happened this year. After learning about the Iditarod they participated in a reading challenge~The Iditaread. The students kept track of their reading minutes to move their teacher's sled down the trail~1 minute was equal to 1 mile. No one made it all 975 miles but there is always next year. Our school read a total of 5,351 minutes. Winner of the Iditaread Challenge was Mrs. Barton's 2nd grade class. They enjoyed a "gourmet" dinner for being the first class to get to the Ophir South checkpoint. The race was close. They only beat Mrs. Ruffedt's Kindergarten class by 6 minutes. Just like in the Iditarod classrooms, the student to reach a checkpoint first received a prize. For every reading slip that a student turned in, their name was entered into a drawing for basket giveaways and a sparkly new bike. Thank you so much to PTC for the help in purchasing some of the prizes. Congratulations to all the winners!! It was so fun to see everyone excited about reading!***

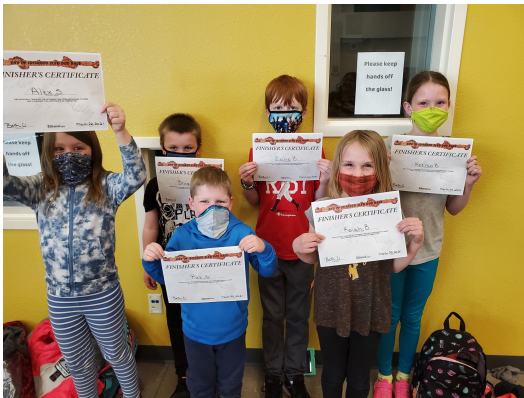
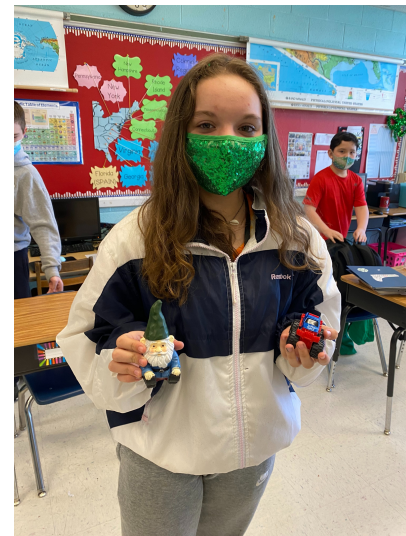
From [Teresa Swoope Campbell](#) at Abingdon Elementary School, VA:

***Celebrating our Iditaread accomplishments and goal completion with an Iditaread Finishers' Banquet was the perfect way to end our inter-disciplinary unit on the Iditarod and Alaska for my 5th graders. Eleven reading assignments were set as checkpoints for our Iditaread challenge that began the first week of March, close to the start of the 2021 Iditarod. Students were recognized for being the first in their homeroom to reach the finish line, for finishing the 11 assignments before the winning musher crossed the finish line, or for finishing the "race" before the deadline. The banquet food included chocolate covered strawberries displayed on a dog sled (a traditional food item from the real Iditarod finishers' banquet), trail mix, ice cream, and red Koolaid (there's a great finish line story about red Koolaid). Some fun prizes included new pickup trucks (pocket sized of course) and a gnome in honor of Nome.***

IditaRead never expires or ends - you can use it through the end of the year and all summer, too. If you are involved in teaching a summer reading program of any kind - school, library, summer programs, etc. - use the IditaRead to keep students moving along the trail.

And please share any stories and pictures you may have of your own IditaRead experience. Email Jane Holmes at [jane.holmes@iditarod.com](mailto:jane.holmes@iditarod.com)





# If You "Mush" Know...

by: Lynne Witte

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

**Abby**

**What do the dogs eat in the summer? Is it different than during the racing season?**

## What is on the Menu?

What is on the menu for sled dogs? What a sled dog eats is very important to their performance year round. The dogs' diet affects their overall health, muscle development, and ability to run their best.

The menu and amount of food for sled dogs changes with the seasons. During the training and race season a high calorie diet is served. It would be like eating three kids' meals from McDonald's for dinner because they need all the calories for all the miles they run. During the off season for sled dogs, their menu is like eating a nice salad and a cheeseburger for dinner. During fall training and racing season, sled dogs have a high quality diet primarily composed of protein and fat. They will often eat their meals as a soup mix of various meats like beef or fish mixed with kibble and water. The dogs will get their hydration through the meat and water mix. Each dog gets ladle servings based on their size. When running, trail snacks such as chunks of frozen meat, chicken skins, or fish, are used. Some sled dogs are served entire raw meal diets but served in a watery soup for nutrition and hydration.

During the off season the dogs will need less calories. They may need only about a 1,000 calories a day. Dogs will eat quality kibble or a diet of special raw meats.

Hydration is on the menu every day for dogs. Clean fresh water will be available at all times to the dogs. In colder temperatures, water may be baited with meat or kibble to encourage drinking. A balance of good nutrition and water is important every day for a sled dog to be healthy.

## Husky Talk Update

by: Erin Montgomery

# RED LANTERN EPISODE

**HUSKY TALK - SEASON FINALE**



Join us as we talk with former Red Lantern winners on our final episode of the season.

**COMING SOON**



# Primary Source of the Month

Jen Reiter

The idea of awarding a red lantern to the final finisher in a dog race apparently got its start during the Fur Rendezvous races in 1953 as a joke. When the Iditarod came into existence, the tradition continued. The award has come to represent the preservation and grit needed to finish the race. The winners of the Red Lantern have chosen to finish what they started, overcoming obstacles, self-doubt, and challenges along the way. Many of the Red Lantern winners have talked about wanting to prove to themselves that they can do difficult things. The attitudes displayed by these mushers are wonderful ones for students to emulate. Not giving up when things get tough is one of Iditarod's greatest lessons.



## 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. Share this [article](#) from canine reporter Gypsy to explain the two lanterns that play a part in the race.
3. Discuss with the students what the Red Lantern award has come to represent. How do they think mushers feel when they receive this award?
4. Have the students think about their school year and all of the ways they persevered when things were tough.
5. Create a brainstorm list and record the students' examples on chart paper for them to refer back to.
6. Have the students secretly choose one of the events reported by another classmate on the brainstorm list. They should design a new award to represent the perseverance needed by their classmate to overcome that challenge.
7. Have the students share their new awards with the student that inspired its creation.

### Associated Resources:

- Jim Deprez, the current Teacher on the Trail, shared how he uses the Red Lantern as a classroom motivator in [this post](#).
- A list of the Red Lantern winners and their times can be found on the [Special Awards Archive](#) page. This data is great for graphing in math class!

# Sanka's Race Challenge - A Route Through Dishkakak

By: Sanka, with some help from Terrie Hanke

The shortest distance between 2 points is a straight line. Archimedes discovered this very basic principle of geometry. The renowned mathematician and scientist lived in Greece 200 years BC. He discovered and recorded many of the basic laws of physics that explain how things work.

If the mushers were in a hurry to get to Nome, say they were delivering life saving medicine, there would be an obvious change in the trail that would cut miles and therefore time off the journey. How many miles would be saved if the trail went straight from Ophir to Kaltag?

It's interesting that back in the days of the Gold Rush, the Historic Iditarod Trail actually went northeast out of Takotna to Ophir, up to Dishkakak then on to Kaltag. Can you assist Iditarod officials by estimating how many miles could be saved using a route this route rather than the indirect northern route up through Ruby or the southern route down through Shageluk?

Included with this challenge are three maps and a couple of mileage charts. One map, used by permission of the Iditarod National Historic Trail Alliance, will help with visualizing this new route. The second map is of Iditarod's Northern Route and the third map is of Iditarod's Southern route. Mileage information is included for the Northern and Southern routes. This information will help in calculating the distance.

How many miles shorter would the run be if mushers used the Dishkakak route? How did you arrive at your estimation?

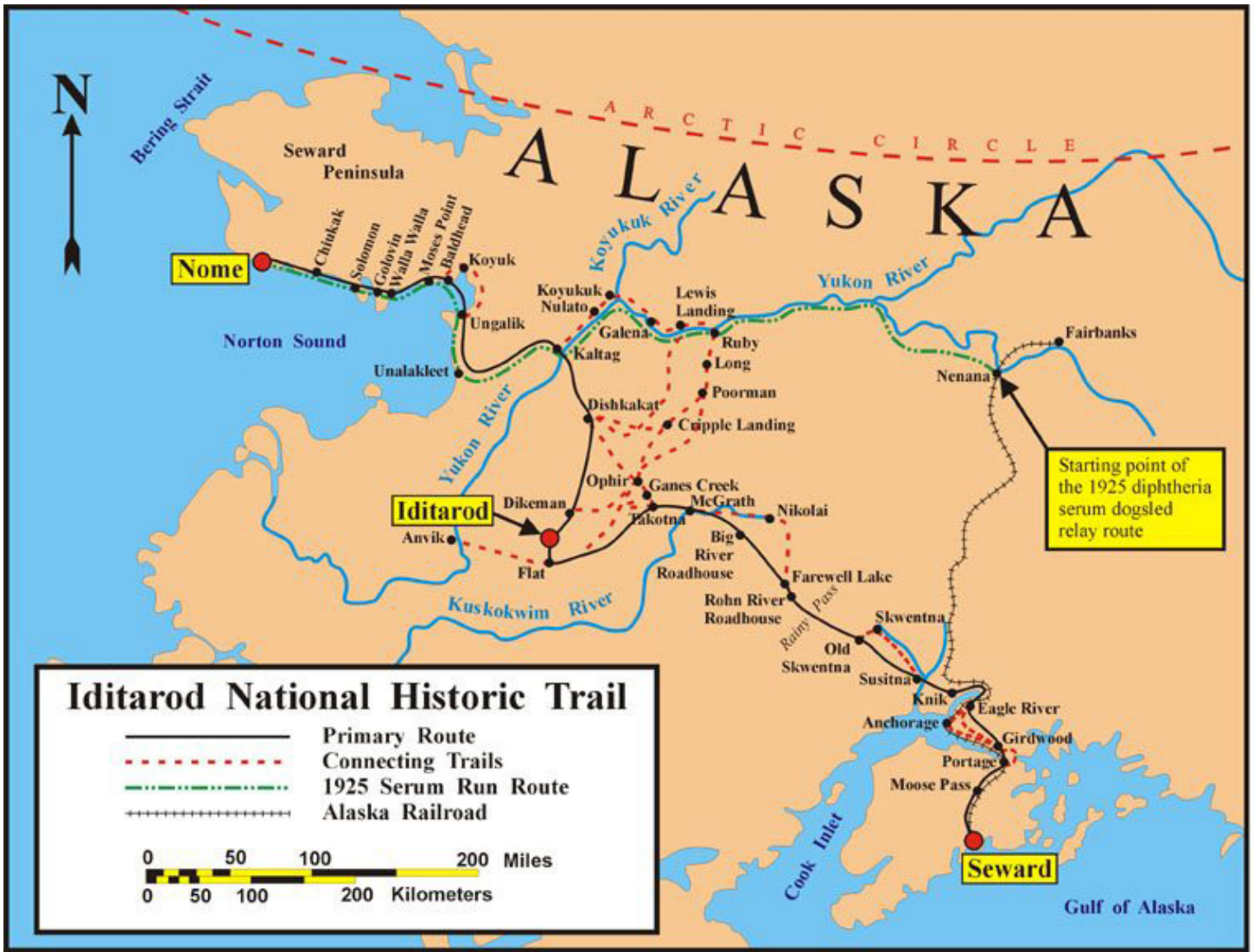
What do you need to know to come up with an answer? How far is it from Ophir to Kaltag? How far is it from Ophir to Kaltag using the Northern route? How far is it from Ophir to Kaltag using the Southern route?

Did you measure distances using the map scale on one of the maps? Did you calculate the distance by subtracting segments from the total? Did you find a distance that looked similar and calculate from there? Did you use a distance finder application?

Sanka did all three and there was between 20 and 40 miles difference in the answers. WHAT, HOW CAN THAT BE? When maps are small, using the scale to measure distance can be inaccurate. Also, what looks like a fairly straight route on a map can have many small curves that aren't visible. Air distance between Takotna and Kaltag is accurate for an airplane traveling in a straight line but landforms affect the trail on the ground so the trail may only be relatively straight. There isn't an exact right answer for this problem because of all those variables. If your answer is around 150 miles, you are on the right track. The trail could be shorter by between 135 and 165 miles.

Sanka has another question. Why does Iditarod use the Northern Route and the Southern Route rather than doing a straight run from Ophir to Takotna? The answer can be found in Sanka's Virtual Trail Journey – Iditarod and Flat at Mile 432. Click this link to search for the answer: [LINK](#)

Northern Route		Southern Route	
Checkpoint	Distance	Checkpoint	Distance
ANC to Campbell Airstrip	11	ANC to Campbell Airstrip	11
Willow to Yentna Station	42	Willow to Yentna Station	42
Yentna Station to Skwentna	30	Yentna Station to Skwentna	30
Skwentna to Finger Lake	40	Skwentna to Finger Lake	40
Finger Lake to Rainy Pass	30	Finger Lake to Rainy Pass	30
Rainy Pass to Rohn	35	Rainy Pass to Rohn	35
Rohn to Nikolai	75	Rohn to Nikolai	75
Nikolai to McGrath	48	Nikolai to McGrath	48
McGrath to Takotna	18	McGrath to Takotna	18
Takotna to Ophir	23	Takotna to Ophir	23
Ophir to Cripple	73	Ophir to Iditarod	80
Cripple to Ruby	70	Iditarod to Shageluk	55
Ruby to Galena	50	Shageluk to Anvik	25
Galena to Nulato	37	Anvik to Grayling	18
Nulato to Kaltag	47	Grayling to Eagle Island	62
Kaltag to Unalakleet	85	Eagle Island to Kaltag	60
Unalakleet to Shaktoolik	40	Kaltag to Unalakleet	85
Shaktoolik to Koyuk	50	Unalakleet to Shaktoolik	40
Koyuk to Elim	48	Shaktoolik to Koyuk	50
Elim to White Mountain	46	Koyuk to Elim	48
White Mountain to Safety	55	Elim to White Mountain	46
Safety to Nome	22	White Mountain to Safety	55
<b>Northern Total Miles</b>	<b>975</b>	Safety to Nome	22
		<b>Southern Total Miles</b>	<b>998</b>

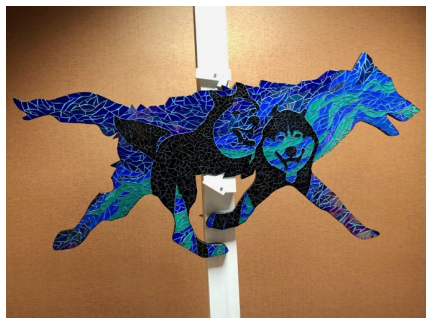


## Sled Dogs in the Classroom: Wrap Up the Year With a Cooperative Project

by: Jen Reiter

This winter looked a little different in downtown Anchorage than it normally does. With the Covid restrictions that were in place, sled dogs were not seen downtown taking off from Fourth Avenue for the start of the Fur Rendezvous or the Iditarod Ceremonial Start in March as they traditionally do. As a way to keep the sled dog spirit alive, seventeen artists created and displayed sled dog silhouettes in downtown businesses in a project called Sled Dogs Downtown. A scavenger hunt was hosted to find and visit all of the sled dogs which were later auctioned off to raise funds for the Anchorage Mushing District.

With the school year coming to an end, have the students reflect on the year by creating original artwork on the sled dog silhouettes to represent their year. What events, topics, projects, novels, etc. would they choose to display on their sled dog? What memories of the year would they want to remember the most? Originally, the plywood dogs were about 42 inches in length. Using butcher paper to create dogs of this size, students could work in partners or teams to create their dogs. Or, give each student a smaller version to work independently, and then create a whole team of dogs! Hold on to the artwork to display at the beginning of next year as a way to welcome your new students and help them get excited for the new year.



Photos: <https://iditarod.com/sled-dogs-downtown-scavenger-hunt/>

Special thanks to Tim Huettle, president of Anchorage Mushing District, who generously shared the silhouette of the sled dog shapes with us. [Click here to access them](#). If you do this project, please share photos with us by sending them to [jen.reiter@iditarod.com](mailto:jen.reiter@iditarod.com) as Mr. Huettle would love to see how students and teachers interpreted the challenge.

Additional Resources:

- See a slideshow of all 17 original dogs [here](#). One of the portions of the event was an online poll to choose the three favorite dogs. Which ones would your class have chosen?
- Iditarod's announcement of the project [here](#).
- If you would like the students to read about the project, check out [this article](#) from Alaska's News Source
- Anchorage Mushing District Information [here](#).

# IDITAROD TEACHER SUMMER TO DO LIST:

- Check the [EDU website](#) each Wednesday beginning May 26th for a look back with tales from the trail from many of our former Teachers on the Trail!
- Get started on YOUR [application](#) to join the Teacher on the Trail family!
- Keep an eye on the Insider - they are planning to show events from the sign up picnic live!
- Keep an eye on the EDU Social Media sites for fall sign ups for projects like the Quilt Project, the Postcard Project, and the Trail Mail projects.
- Pick up a few good beach reads from our [library](#).

## Mark Your Calendar



June 26, 2021: First Day to Sign Up for the 2022 Iditarod  
September: Next Issue of Mush On! arrives in your inbox!

**Iditarod**<sup>®</sup> **EDU**

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