Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

MUSH ON!

YOU CAN LEARN A LOT FROM A TEAM OF DOGS

NOVEMBER 2026 *VOL. 7, NO. 3*

EDU PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:
TEACHER ON THE TRAIL/WINTER CONFERENCE

Teacher on the Trail: We'd love you to represent the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and educators everywhere in the teaching adventure of a lifetime. Apply to be the next Iditarod Teacher on the Trail. The 3 finalists will receive a $500 stipend. Applications are due Dec. 1. The first step to join our team of dedicated teachers is to click the application *here*.

Winter Conference: Whether you are a "veteran" or "rookie" Iditarod educator, or just want to include an adventure learning project in your classroom, this conference will be one to remember. Walk away with full lessons and ideas to adapt for your own students and classrooms back home. Learn how to use the tools offered through the Iditarod, Iditarod EDU and the many programs we offer during the school year. You will hear from past Teachers on the Trail™, this year's Teacher on the Trail™, finalists and some special guest presenters. Sign up by Dec. 1 to get the conference for half off. **Even better, bring a co-worker and split the cost of the room!** More info *here*.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November:
20 - Trail Mail Art Contest Due

December:
1 - 2028 Teacher on the Trail *Application* Due
***18* - Dog Blankets due at Iditarod Headquarters**
***31* - Sign up for *Winter Conference* to get $300 Discount!**

March, 2027:
2-5 *Education Winter Conference*

Calling all artists!
Trail Mail Artwork
Due Nov. 20
The theme is
50 Years of Junior Iditarod.
Check it out!

POSTCARD CHALLENGE

We would love for you to join our 2027 Postcard Challenge. The purpose of this program is to connect Iditarod classrooms to other classrooms around the United States and beyond. If you join the project, you are committing to sending postcards to each class on the list between the first week of January and when the first musher leaves the Iditarod starting line, March 6, 2027. In your postcard message, we ask you to tell a little about your state and what you look forward to in the 2027 Iditarod. You can add information about your state's symbols, things your state is known for, fun things to do in your state, your favorite thing about your state, or anything you want to share. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about our 50 United States!

The list for the challenge will be out when you return to school in January so it's a great project to get students back into writing after a holiday break. Email linda.fenton@iditarod.com if you would like to join this program.



TAMI'S TRAIL NOTES: TEACHER ON THE TRAIL

Two coasts, one trail: Crossing into November

The 5th — Paws to Learn:
This month's lesson will focus on a Social Studies survival twist. Students will examine how people in different periods meet their needs, and compare and contrast survival in two very different settings: the Paleolithic Age and the modern-day Iditarod. I hope you will "paws" and check it out on the Iditarod EDU website.

The 25th — Paths to Connect:
This month's path will explore how books are creating connections from Maine to Alaska that reach far beyond the pages. Through sending, receiving, and sharing books, students can travel the Iditarod Trail through stories, discover new perspectives, and build connections with readers across the miles. Each book becomes a bridge between classrooms, communities, and states, reminding us that learning has no boundaries.

I hope you'll take a few minutes to check it out, give it a try with your students now, or save it in your teaching sledbag for when Iditarod 2027 gets closer. However you choose to use it, I hope it gives your students a chance to have fun, make connections, and learn as they follow the trail toward new discoveries!

Herb Brambley
2010 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail
By Terrie Hanke



With sadness, Iditarod EDU shares the passing of 2010 Teacher on the Trail, Herb Brambley. Brambley had a passion for sled dogs and was a musher at heart with dreams of someday running Iditarod. He was a guitar artist, singer and song writer. Songs he wrote in 2010 are in the Teacher on the Trail archives. *Herb's Music*.

On the trail, he sang and played, sharing his folk songs and ballads with children, mushers and volunteers. One special occasion was the evening of the Jr. Iditarod out at Yentna Station where Herb joined well known guitarist and singer Dan Gabryszak, owner of Yentna Station, to entertain the road house guests and Jr. Iditarod volunteers.

Herb taught environmental education and technology in the Warfordsburg, Pennsylvania school district. He was instrumental in securing a large grant to establish the environmental education program along with the nature trails that meandered through 140 acres of woods and fields alongside ponds, wetlands and streams. He called this outdoor space the largest classroom in the world but when he became the 2010 Teacher on the Trail his classroom expanded to reach students around the entire world.

He wove technology and environmental education into the lessons he shared as Teacher on the Trail. His overall theme for the year was "Trail to Every Classroom." He provided resources and ideas to incorporate the Iditarod Trail, the Iditarod National Historic Trail, the Appalachian Trail as well as other well-known trails for teachers to use in place based education activities.

Herb worked on developing a "Trail to Every Classroom" program for Alaska schools. When in Takotna Herb wrote, "One of the best pieces of advice that I can give a traveler in Alaska as well as someone just meeting a new neighbor for the first time is to find common ground whether it be a common interest, hobby, music, or acquaintance. This draws people together and makes life pleasant and interesting."

From the first Teacher on the Trail, Finney Aufderheyde, "May the trail traveling guitarist rest in peace with music filling his soul."

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November Lesson Ideas
By Heidi Sloan

Geometry, Measurement, and Art

This lesson plan by Teacher on the Trail Jen Reiter creates teamwork within your classroom, incorporating geometry and measurement, enlarging to scale a piece of Iditarod Art. Every state has collaboration as a skill students should learn, so try out this multifaceted approach to cooperation, math, and collaboration!

Scaling Up the Trail

Food on the Iditarod Trail: Books and Writing

Well-meaning former Teachers on the Trail and volunteers told me to be prepared to be culturally sensitive. "You may be offered gelled moose nose." As much as I wanted to be sensitive to the kindness of the communities on the Iditarod, I just didn't know if I had it in me to eat anything nose related! This article by Teacher on the Trail Juli Westrich discusses a couple good books to use with your class about foods on the trail, Thanksgiving writing about family traditions, and more! To finish my tale, no moose nose was offered, thankfully!

Comfort Food



Iditarod EDU

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IKIDAROD

You can learn a lot from a team of dogs!

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VOCABULARY WORD OF THE MONTH

***Swing Dog*: Dog that runs directly behind the leader. The dog's job is to help "swing" the team during the turns or curves.**



Checkpoint of the Month

Ophir

POPULATION: 0

Halloween is officially over, but we need to learn about the checkpoint of Ophir. Yep, it's a ghost town. Gold was discovered here in the late 1800's so miners and their dogs flooded the area. They needed the dogs to help haul supplies to the mines and, hopefully, haul gold back from the mines.

According to Alaska.guide, there was a post office in Ophir that was operated at intervals from 1909 to 1957. Its population in 1910 was 122; in 1920, 22; in 1930, 19; and in 1950, 68. Now, 0.

There are a few old buildings in Ophir and some left over mining machinery, but every year Ophir comes alive during the Iditarod.

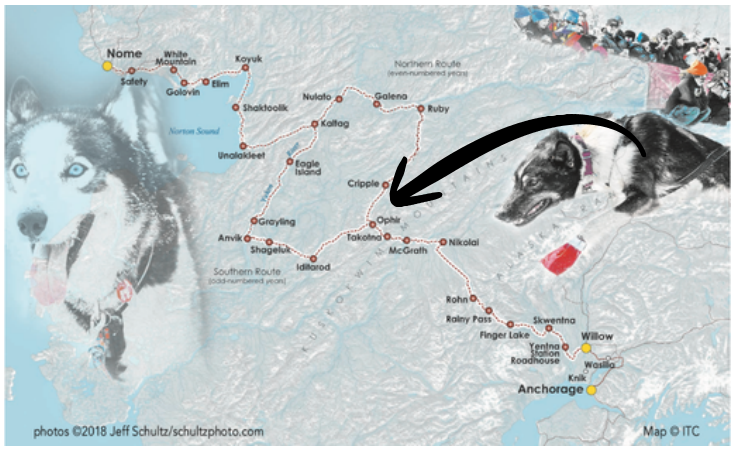
THE TWO ROUTES

Did you know that the Iditarod doesn't use the same route every year? There are actually 2 routes - the Northern Route and the Southern Route. If you look on the map below you'll see that at the Ophir checkpoint the trail goes either north to Cripple or south to Iditarod. How do they know which way to go? On even number years, they go north. Odd number years they go south. The next race is in 2027 so they will use the Southern Route.

There are a few reasons for the 2 routes. The villages along the trail are very small and it's difficult to handle all the mushers, dogs, and volunteers that come through. It's also a way to include more villages in the race.

There are exceptions to the routes. In 2021, due to Covid 19, the race was a loop so they wouldn't bring disease into the villages. There have also been low snow years so the start moves to Fairbanks and picks up a few different villages.

Are the 2 routes the same distance? Look at the next page and figure it out.



Ophir



	NORTHERN ROUTE			SOUTHERN ROUTE
Checkpoints	**Distance between Checkpoints**		**Checkpoints**	**Distance between Checkpoints**
Anchorage to Campbell Air	11		Anchorage to Campbell Ai	11
Willow to Yentna Station	42		Willow to Yentna Station	42
Yentna Station to Skwentna	30		Yentna Station to Skwentn	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 Golovin	28		Koyuk to Elim	48
Golovin to White Mountain	18		Elim to Golovin	28
White Mountain to Safety	55		Golovin to White Mountair	18
Safety to Nome	22		White Mountain to Safety	55
			Safety to Nome	22
TOTAL DISTANCE				

HERE ARE THE 2 MAIN IDITAROD ROUTES. AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE ARE SOME DIFFERENCES.

1. Are there the same number of checkpoints on each route? _____

2. What is the total distance of the Northern Route?_____ The Southern Route?_____

3. What is the difference in miles between the two routes? _____