

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

## NEWS & FEATURES

Teaching Ideas &  
Photo of the Month  
**PAGE 2**

Updates from the  
Teacher on the Trail  
**PAGE 3**

K9 Journalist: Sled Dog Ed  
**PAGE 4**

If You Mush Know  
& Jon Van Zyle Art  
**PAGE 5**

Dog of the Month  
**PAGE 6**

Teaching With the First Ten  
Years & Husky Talk  
**PAGE 7**

The Great Debate &  
Calendar  
**PAGE 8**



Photo: Jen Reiter

## Don't Let the Fun Stop Now

BY JEN REITER

Just because the Red Lantern has crossed the finish line, doesn't mean the Iditarod fun has to stop! Just as mushers are reviewing this year's race and making plans on what to do differently next year, students can reflect on where they are at this point of the year and what they can do differently to round out the year. Lots of the mushers are sharing their trail stories, which can serve as inspiration or mentor texts for students to record their own adventures. Plus, it's not too late to have your students write a letter to their favorite musher and congratulate them on a great race ([see here for details](#)). This edition is full of other great ways to keep the Iditarod fun going year-round, or to help you, as a teacher, reflect and revise your units with next year in mind.

This year's Winter Conference was a great success! We were thrilled to welcome teachers from around the US to Anchorage for Iditarod Week. We officially jump-started our first Iditarod Certified Educator cohort, who have successfully completed their first challenge. Check out their work [here](#), and meet one of Iditarod's superstar volunteers!



"This is just the beginning. It's always just the beginning."

~Brent Sass  
after winning the  
2022 Iditarod

## April Teaching Ideas

BY: HEIDI SLOAN

### Science

After following the 2022 Iditarod and hearing the mushers talk about how closely they watch their dogs' eating, here is a high-level [science lesson](#) on nutrition for sled dogs.

### Math

Let your students have a debate about which route of the Iditarod they would like to take after they find the average leg of both trails! If your class tracked mushers reaching checkpoints, this is a good follow-up [math lesson](#).

### Literacy

For an [inference lesson](#), students can learn more about the Iditarod Air Force and the planes that fly vets, volunteers, the Teachers on the Trail™, race judges, and returned dogs between checkpoints.

This middle school [literacy lesson](#) provides inference practice as well as material for critical thinking; students create quote books! [\*\*This will be done with Google Slides instead of the link in the lesson.]

### Art

Use old Iditarod calendars or pictures printed to create "stretched art" pieces! The [lesson](#) also includes a writing component. When students need a creative station or creative break, add this in to encourage their writing and thinking.

## Photo of The Month: Sage Advice...

This young fan got a chance to wish Matthew Failor "good luck" as he passed by during the ceremonial start of this year's race. Knowing what they know from this year's race, have the students write some advice that they would give to the mushers as they head out for next year's start. Click the photo for a larger image.



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

The 50th running of the Last Great Race is in the books. And what a race it was. As with any year, there are many necessary parts that have to work together to accomplish a 1,000-mile race. There was no difference this year.

The classroom connection this month is in tribute to the hardworking trail breakers that begin the race, and the volunteer piece is for all who have served as race judges. Both roles are integral to an event of this magnitude.



### Classroom Connections: Dash and Dot with the Trailbreakers

In this STEM lesson, students work with a certain type of coding bot called Dash and Dots. Students use their knowledge of angles, measurement, and coding to make their bot travel a predetermined course. Along the way, cotton balls make up the snowdrifts that are placed along the "trail". Using a snowplow-type accessory, the groups of students are tasked with clearing the path all the way to the finish while leaving a clear trail behind them. Students can use many different strategies to accomplish this task while working collaboratively in groups. It is a very fun STEM project to relate to the job of the trail breakers. For the full lesson and pictures, check out the EDU website on the 15th.

Photo: Jim Deprez

### Voices of the Volunteers: Karin Hendrickson, Race Judge

Karin Hendrickson is a familiar name and face in the current Iditarod scene. This year will be her 10th Iditarod race as a musher since her rookie year in 2009. However, during her non-racing years, she has still been an important part of the race, serving as a race judge on a few occasions. This is how she fits into the volunteer category. During my talk with her, she spoke passionately about the race and her involvement both as a musher and volunteer. The people of the race and mushing community specifically stand out. She also has an incredible backstory and is one of the few mushers who holds a full-time job in addition to dog mushing, which really is a full-time job in itself! You can read more about Karin, her kennel, and her team here: <https://blueonblackdogs.com/>. Come back on the 30th to read the full interview.



Photo Credit: Jeff Schultz © copyright 2019 & 2020 by Jeff Schultz Photography Inc.



## K9 Journalist Corner

by: Sled Dog Ed



Greetings, Teachers!

Spring is in the air and temperatures are rising. While basking in the sun and taking an afternoon nap the other day on the front porch, my buddy, Topaz, and I overheard sweet music coming from the house. Capturing our attention and echoing dreamily in our ears was a set of lyrics from the song.

"Memories.  
Light the corners of my mind.  
Misty water-colored memories."

It seems hard to believe that the 50th running of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race is now history and a "memory" in our minds. What a fabulous and exciting race it was filled with adventures and heartwarming scenes! The broken sled incident of Michelle Phillips touched my heart immensely. Michelle's sled broke on the way from Rohn into Nikolai. Upon arriving in Nikolai, she shared her story with fellow mushers. Ryan Redington, the grandson of the "Father of the Iditarod", immediately offered Michelle his spare sled to use once she arrived in McGrath. His thoughtfulness exemplified the true Iditarod spirit!

Even the Junior Iditarod proved to make new memories for those involved. The race moved up to Cantwell, youth encountered moose blocking the trail, a close finish with about six seconds between the winner and second place, and multiple sleds and teams mingling in the finish chute at the same time. Hats off to all the Juniors for an exciting race and congratulations to Emily Robinson, winner and "Rookie of the Year".

Many people over the years have captured, created, and shared their fond memories of Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Races. There has been Jeff Schultz through his photography, current and former Iditarod Teacher on the Trail journal entries, "Eye on the Trail" blog by Terrie Hanke, 2006 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail, stories from volunteers and family members of mushers, and even trail notes from the mushers themselves. At our kennel, a book lies on the coffee table entitled, Jon Van Zyle's [Iditarod Memories: 40th Anniversary Edition](#) which includes forty years of Iditarod Trail posters painted by Jon Van Zyle and stories written by his wife, Jona.

What is your favorite memory of the 50th Year of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race? What about previous races or historical people associated with the race? How about any sled dogs that stand out in your mind as you think back over the years? Is there a favorite story you have heard from the Iditarod Trail over the years? What about a picture that has sparked a significant memory for you?

Your students will appreciate your responses to the aforementioned questions. But more importantly, if they have followed the race for a few years or have done historical research on the race, they might have their own memories to share. If this year was their first experience with the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, what was most memorable for them?

The song lyrics above mentioned "Misty water-colored memories." Time for your students to take out their paintbrushes, watercolors, colored pencils, or whatever form of art media they choose and create a visual picture of their favorite Iditarod memory. Students can then share the story of their memory through the written word thus enhancing the visual they created. Your students might write a quote, a poem (April is National Poetry Month), a story, or perhaps their own original song!

Topaz and I can already envision your classroom with a collage of Iditarod memories so beautifully displayed. Maybe your students will even choose to extend this activity by creating a visual picture of their favorite memory from the school year!

As your school year draws to a close, remember the following quote by Lois Lowry, an American writer for children and young adults.

"I've always been fascinated by memory and dreams  
because they are both completely our own.  
No one else has the same memories.  
No one has the same dreams."

Topaz and I are headed back to nap time in the sun...keep dreaming!!!!

~Sled Dog Ed

# If You "Mush" Know...

by: Lynne Witte

Illustrated by: Jon Van Zyle

## Checkpoint Vet Routines

Happy tail-wagging dogs coming into a checkpoint is the goal of mushers and veterinarians. The Iditarod mushers and veterinarians work together to give the dogs the best care possible throughout the Iditarod. At every checkpoint along the trail, there are teams of experienced veterinarians.

As a team enters a checkpoint, the veterinarians are carefully watching the dogs. The vet is looking at the gait of the dogs and their attitude to see if there are any immediate red flags. If the musher is going through the checkpoint, the vets will take time with the musher to just check basic body condition and hydration on a couple of dogs. This is a check for anything that might be wrong with the team. But if there are no red flags or issues, the team will be allowed to continue through the checkpoint.

With teams stopping at the checkpoint for a rest or a mandatory layover, the veterinarians will spend additional time examining each dog. Each musher carries a "vet book" as mandatory gear. This is written documentation of each dog in the team. It is a communication tool for the vets along the trail. After a vet examines a team, they document it in the mushers' vet book and sign it to be used as a reference at following checkpoint exams. The team of veterinarians use a standard check called HAW-L. H= hydration and heart rate. A = appetite and attitude. W = body weight. L = lungs. The vet checking the team will document concerns on particular dogs in the vet book. The vets will also check the dogs' feet: are there any splits, check for harness rub, check for any frostbite. They will check the shoulders, wrists, and muscles on the dogs for any soreness. The goal of the vet check is to help the mushers give their dogs the best care possible. The goal is for the vets and mushers to work together to give the best care possible to each dog.

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

From Mrs. Varelli's Class:

**What are the vets looking for when they check the dogs at each checkpoint?**



Each Iditarod, the Leonard Seppala Humanitarian Award is awarded at the conclusion of the Iditarod. It is awarded to a musher who demonstrated outstanding dog care while remaining competitive through the race and is chosen by the veterinarians. This year, the award was won by Dan Kaduce, who finished in fourth place with a full string of 14 dogs!



# Dog of the Month!

by: Kelly Villar, with Martin Buser

This month, we take a trip out to Martin Buser's Happy Trail Kennel in Big Lake, Alaska. Martin Buser was born in Winterthur, Switzerland in 1958. He came to Alaska in 1979 to learn about sled dogs, their care, and training. He worked and trained with Alaskan mushers Earl and Natalie Norris and ran his first Iditarod in 1980.

As I write, Martin is currently racing in the 2022 Iditarod. His team has arrived in Nulato and is resting before heading to Unalakleet. Martin Buser has had 36 consecutive Iditarod finishes and 38 total finishes. He is a four-time Iditarod champion winning the race in 1992, 1994, 1997, and 2002.

Let's meet Martin's special dog, Jasmine:

***Meet Jasmine, the little leader that can. This sleek long-bodied beauty is indeed a Princess! Her sisters are Elsa, Belle, and Aurora, and yes, you get the picture. Jasmine's birthday is May 28. She was born in 2015 to Rigid and Lindsey Vonn, two accomplished Iditarod dogs. She will be one of the senior team members in the Happy Trails 2022 Iditarod team.***

***Jasmine might have been named after a Disney Princess but she doesn't always behave like one. Her skills include leading the team, taking commands, and turning in any direction on a dime. But, her other traits might not be so ladylike, she can steal her neighbor's food quicker than the musher can respond and if one of the boys sniffs her without asking, she has no reservations about putting the offender in his place. Jasmine can and will run anywhere in the team next to anybody. She also loves to run "off-leash" so to speak, meaning before, and certainly, after a training run, she romps around the kennel visiting the gang, and if there is food or a bone to steal, she will gladly oblige!***

***Jasmine finished the Iditarod in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2022.***

We are looking forward to seeing Jasmine at the finish line in Nome! To learn more about Martin Buser and his dogs at, Martin Buser's Happy Trails Kennel LLC go to <http://buserdog.com/>



Photo: Martin Buser, Happy Trails Kennel LLC

## Teaching with the First Ten Years

by: Jane Holmes

This month's lesson prompt is based on the book The First Ten Years, pg. 384 **"Thoughts About the Iditarod Trail"** by Joe Redington, Sr. This piece is a beautiful summary of Joe's perspective of the Iditarod Trail written in 1977 for the first Iditarod Runner. These storytelling activities will make Joe's memoir come alive!

**Teachers should preview all pages before deciding how to use them in the classroom.**

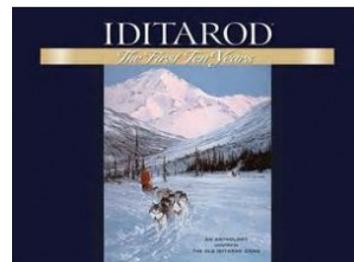
**Grade level:** K - 2

**Subject:** Speaking and Listening

**College and Career Readiness Standards practiced in this lesson:**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1.5**

**Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.**



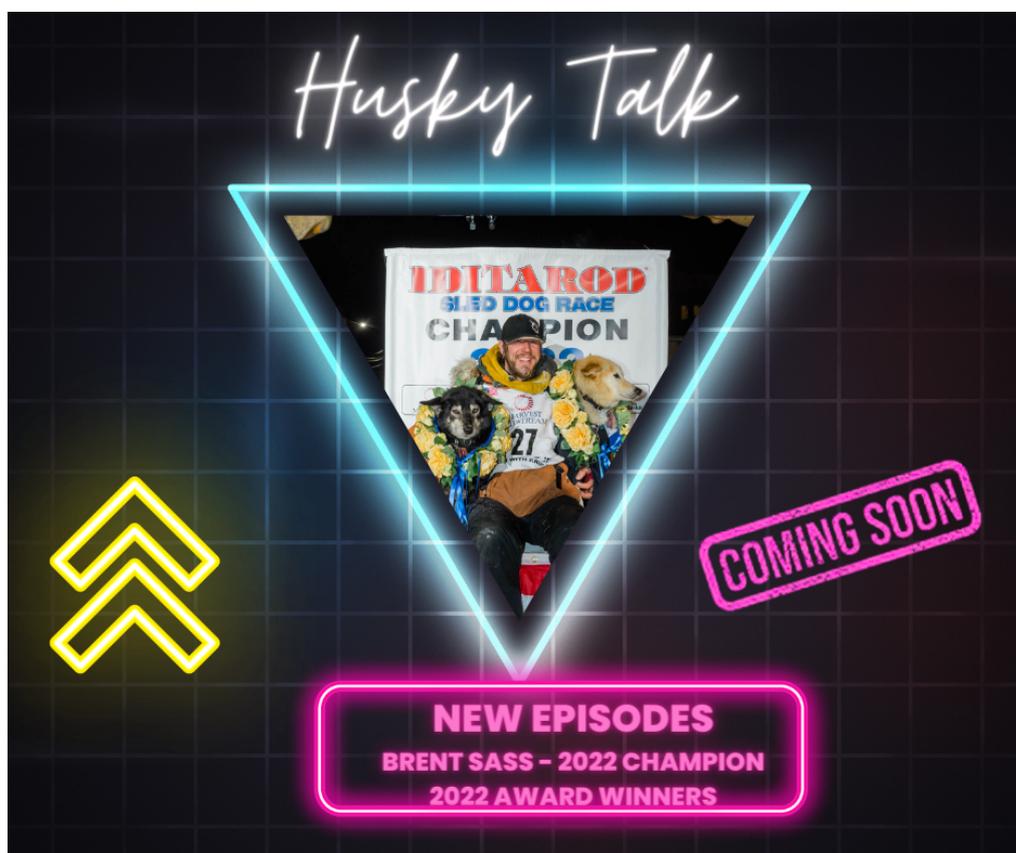
Read this article aloud, having students pick a word or phrase that stands out to them. Then have the students create an action that "shows" the word/phrase they selected and teach it to the class. Reread the article with students adding their actions to the words.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.5**

**Create audio recordings of stories or poems; add drawings or other visual displays to stories or recounts of experiences when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.**

Add the element of recording! Students can memorize key sentences. The teacher reads the article aloud, pausing for students to interject their memorized pieces. Make a video recording of the students acting out the reading while the teacher reads aloud.

**Educators may purchase a copy of Iditarod: The First Ten Years at cost, \$30.00. Email [jane.holmes@iditarod.com](mailto:jane.holmes@iditarod.com) for the discount code.**



# Mark Your Calendar

June 22: First Day to Sign-Up for the 2023 Iditarod

Fall 2022: Second Iditarod Certified Educator Cohort Begins



## Newsletter Staff

**Editor:** Jen Reiter

**Contributing Writers:**      **Photography/Art:**

Jim Deprez	Happy Trails Kennel
Jane Holmes	Jim Deprez
Annie Kelley McGuire	Jen Reiter
Erin Montgomery	Jeff Schultz
Heidi Sloan	Jon Van Zyle
Jen Reiter	
Kelly Villar	
Nancy Wendt	
Lynne Witte	



Newsletter Feedback, Questions, or Suggestions?  
email: [jen.reiter@iditarod.com](mailto:jen.reiter@iditarod.com)