

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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## Easing Into Summer

**BY JEN REITER**

On behalf of the Iditarod Education Department, we want to thank you for all of your hard work this year, and for allowing us to follow along on the trail with you! In our final issue of the year, you'll find some ideas for keeping the Iditarod fun going during the last, few, frantic weeks of the year as you ease into summer!

We hope, like many of the Iditarod sled dogs, you get to spend your summer lounging around your house!

Don't forget to check in with [Iditarod.com](http://Iditarod.com) in late June to see who signs up for the 2023 Iditarod run!



# May Teaching Ideas

BY: HEIDI SLOAN

## Literacy

Reviewing for standardized tests? Here is a literacy activity that will review [reading strategies](#) with Iditarod photos!

Summer reading suggestions follow to keep your students reading over the break, motivated by Iditarod-themed literature.

[Dog Days of Summer](#)

[Good Reads with Great Messages](#)

[Summer Reads -Teen Classics](#)

## End of Year Iditarod Learning

As the end of the school year approaches, here are a couple of hands-on learning activities that will keep your students engaged and motivated in spite of the draw of summer vacation approaching.

[Creating dog box houses](#) with volume and wrapping up with a

[cooperative sled dog project](#) will enrich your students' history, math, and art studies!

## Preparing for the 2022-23 School Year

Teachers often plan ahead for what we can do differently or better the following year. Here is a [plan for sled dog teamwork](#) that may jumpstart cooperative learning in the fall.

## Photo of The Month: Ready to Explore...

These young pups look like they are ready to head out into the big world on their first adventure! Use it as a kick-off prompt to have your students write about where they'd like to go for their summer exploration. Click the photo for a larger image.



Photo: Jen Reiter

"Personal sacrifices are really the beginning and the end of everything because you don't win because you do one thing right or two things right. You win because you do 1,000 little things right throughout the year."

~Susan Butcher

# 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 school year is winding down, testing is finishing up and everyone is getting ready for the upcoming summer break. After 2 years of educators struggling with Covid we are now starting to come out on the other side. The past 2 years have been quite memorable for me personally as well, as I have had the incredible opportunity to serve as the Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™ for both 2021 and 2022. However, this will be my last posting in the newsletter as the teacher. Julianne Westrich was recently named the 2023 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™ and will be continuing this writeup next year when the newsletter picks up again in September. She is extremely excited about her upcoming journey and will be an incredible addition to the Iditarod family. The official transfer of the sleeping bag will occur this summer as well. It has been an amazing experience, and I thank you all for following along with my journey. I wish everybody a well deserved summer break and here's looking forward to Iditarod 2023!



Photo: pethelpful.com

### Misconceptions and More: Wolves/Dogs

For this post, I looked back at another common question I received from my students over the years; "Are some of those wolves?" Or, "Why do the dogs look so much like wolves, are they part wolf?" This misconception is not helped by any means by the 1995 Disney cartoon movie "Balto", which wrongly states that Balto was half wolf and "couldn't be trusted". For younger children, this is a very complex question. Understandably so! Some of the dogs do resemble wolves in their facial look and coloring. There is scientific evidence that modern-day dogs evolved and became domesticated by humans over tens of thousands of years, but there is still a distinct difference between the two species. Be sure to check out the post about this on the 15th!

### Voices of the Volunteers: Martha Dobson

Martha has served the Iditarod in a few different positions. She, like myself, got her start as the Teacher on the Trail™! She served in that role in 2011 and has held a couple of different positions since then, including trail comms and helping out in the Nome dog lot. Now she is the coordinator of the so-called "Pee Team". She collects samples from the K9 athletes during the race and submits the samples for testing. Martha shared some very interesting stories including one about flying over John Baker's team during the race. Look for the full interview with Martha on the 30th.



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



## K9 Journalist Corner

by: Libby Littles

Photos: Iditarod.com



### Libby: Sleddog Rhythms and Routines

Libby here! As I get close to being one whole year old, I've been remembering all the changes that have happened in my life so far. A lot of what I remember is the rhythms and routines of my puppy year.

The first rhythm I remember was my mother's heartbeats. Thumpa thumpa thumpa! Our squirming pile of puppy-ness snuggled up against the coziest, warmest mama sled dog in the world. Have you ever seen a puppy pile snuggled close to their mama? It's the sweetest thing.

Soon, my puppy life became a soothing rhythm of snuggle, eat, sleep, snuggle, eat, sleep. As our puppy eyes began to open, we noticed the world around us, and we started to explore. The rhythm became eat, sleep, play, eat, sleep, play. And squeal. When we got hungry or tired or lonely, we squealed, and mom would come to take care of us. Ah, that was the life!



The bigger we got, the bigger our world became, and the more rhythms we found around us. There still was play, sleep, eat, but everything was faster. Squirm became wiggle and bounce, and pitter-patter of puppy paws. We would chase chase around the puppy pen, then the puppy yard, then make a puppy pile and have another big nap.

Little by little, we started to notice the other big dogs. Besides Mom. They had their own rhythms of eat, sleep, and play. Instead of Mom, the mushers helped set the rhythm. Once, Mom explained to me that we would learn to trust the mushers because the mushers fit our rhythm. For sled dogs, the mushers start the day, bringing bowls of warm food and morning greetings. They help keep us clean, take us out to run, and make sure we have a safe and cozy place to sleep.

Day after day, when you can count on the rhythms, it's easier to trust that you will be ok. The mushers call it chores or "routines", and they help create a predictable, reliable, and comforting rhythm of life. Mom says it's super important for Iditarod sled dogs to trust that their mushers understand the rhythms. The mushers set the rhythm of running and eating and resting. If we run too long before resting, we won't be able to keep up our running pace. When we stop to sleep, great mushers know how to quickly take care of our feet and our empty tummies so we can get a good long rest. When the musher's routines fit our sleddog rhythm, it's a wonderful thing!

The mushers also figure out how to fit our sleddog rhythm to the rhythm of the seasons. When one Iditarod ends, preparing for the next one begins. Summer, when it's too hot for the work of pulling, it's time for free runs and relaxing in the sun. As days get shorter and colder, mushers start to put the sled dogs in harness again. The mushers don't take us straight out to long runs. They set the rhythm, starting slowly and growing our strength and stamina (ability to keep going) to prepare for the time when the snow returns. Running. Resting. Eating. In a balanced rhythm.



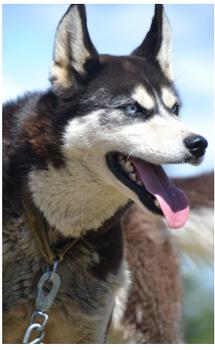


When I was old enough for free runs, I got to feel the rhythm of sleddog feet. Bumbling and tumbling down a muddy trail was a bit wild at first, but soon we were loping like the Big Dogs. There's something spectacular about running alongside your best friends with a thumpa thumpa of paws in your ears and in your heart. When I got to run alongside the team on fall practice runs, the thumpa thumpa became a whole symphony of rhythms, from a pad-pad-pad walk, to a trot-trot-trot, to a thrumming lope. Mom says there is nothing so thrilling as being hooked in harness with your team, all running together, creating one deep rhythm across the snowy wilderness.

As we slide into the seasonal rhythm of spring, summer, fall, winter, I end my puppy year and begin the next verse of my sleddog life. I will play and eat and sleep and run. I will dream of the first snowfall, hooked in with my team, experiencing the rhythm of the trail.

What are the rhythms in your life? What is the rhythm of your day, the rhythm of the seasons? What routines help you keep the rhythm? How do they help you feel safe?





## K9 Journalist Corner

by: Gypsy



# Summers for Sled Dogs

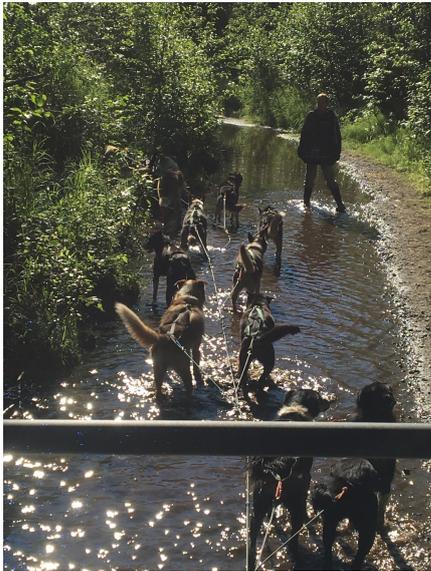
Dear Friends,

The days are getting longer and the temperatures outside are warming up. What happens with us sled dogs come summer?

For one thing, we shed the layer hair closest to our skin. With so much loose hair, some dog owners collect the piles of dog hair, take it to a weaver, and let them weave beautiful hats!



We continue to train as sled dogs. Without snow, however, our mushers need to be more creative. Some mushers have their dogs swim to stay in shape. Teams may also pull carts or ATVs, sometimes running through puddles and shallow streams. Giant running wheels like hamsters use, allow dogs to run, releasing some of their energy. Other mushers take their teams to the icy glaciers around Alaska so that they can pull sleds and give tourists rides.



When dogs are pulling and running through the Iditarod, they eat about 10,000 calories per day. However, in the summer when training isn't as hard, they don't need as many calories. Lynne Witte wrote this:

"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."  
[iditarod.com, May 2021]

In conclusion, how we train in the summer changes from when we have snow, but we still get to run!

Until next time, Gypsy

# If You "Mush" Know...

by: Lynne Witte

Illustrated by: Jon Van Zyle

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

From Mrs. Thomas/s Class:

**We noticed that the winning lead dog got yellow roses at the finish line. Can you tell us about that tradition?**

## Tradition of the Yellow Rose Garland

Brent Sass won his first Iditarod in the 50th Iditarod on March 15, 2022. The team finished under the Burlled Arch in Nome in 8 days, 14 hours, 38 minutes, and 43 seconds with Slater and Morelo leading his team. After Brent attended to the dogs by thanking each dog and giving them special snacks, Morelo and Slater were presented with garlands of yellow roses while seated on each side of Brent. The rest of the team turned and watched their musher and leaders as they had done to succeed in winning the race. It was a scene of true joy as the color yellow is said to represent

Following the tradition of the Kentucky Derby, Barb Redington stated the Iditarod initiated the yearly presentation of the yellow rose garlands to honor the leaders of the championship team. Like the Kentucky Derby, roses are presented to the winner to symbolize a massive achievement for both humans and animals. The Iditarod championship team trained to endure the extreme conditions they encountered and worked together with their musher to succeed as Iditarod champions earning the golden honor as represented by the yellow roses.



# Dog of the Month!

by: Kelly Villar, with Kailyn Davis

This month we meet Iditarod 2022 rookie Kailyn Davis and her dog Zeke. Although this was Kailyn's first Iditarod, it was not for Zeke. Zeke ran his first race with Al Eischens. Kailyn was born in Anchorage and moved to Fairbanks in 2010. She was a high school math teacher in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District before getting the opportunity to mush in the Iditarod. This year, she ran with dogs from Wade Mars Kennel, and Zeke. Here is his story:

**When I first adopted Zeke from the Fairbanks North Star Borough Animal Control at 11 months old, he had no hair. He was underweight with a bad case of mange and full-body skin infection which resulted in large patches of itchy bleeding scabs. The vets almost made the decision to put him down. He was instead sent out to a local foster home, and his foster mom took him to Cold Spot Feeds regularly to socialize him and get him out of the house. Most people saw him and turned down a different aisle, but I couldn't help but ask about him. 24 hours later I was at the shelter signing his adoption papers.**

**I was pretty sure at first he wasn't going to survive. The vets had tried some medications already and nothing worked. We were worried about his infection going systemic. With the help of the Fairbanks Animal Shelter Fund, a non-profit organization that supplies veterinary care to shelter pets in need, we were able to try one last medication and cross our fingers. Zeke went into the vet once a week for medicine injections and was on a whole host of antibiotics for quite a while, and slowly, he started to heal. Yet the itching and discomfort persisted. He was outfitted daily in a red hoodie to cover his sores and wore booties on his back feet to protect him from scratching too hard. When the itching was the worst, we'd go on a run. First, it was just short bike rides on the sunny March trails, sometimes skijors. Whenever Zeke was running, he wasn't in pain. Our runs got longer, and the longer he ran the faster he healed and the more comfort he was in. All you had to do was pick up his harness and he'd start zooming in tight circles around the cabin, jumping at the front door whining impatiently. By the fall, his hair was nearly grown back, sleek and shiny. During the day I'd go to school at the University of Fairbanks, and in the evening we'd run. I started training a team for the Goose Bay 150 and Copper Basin 300 with musher Al Eischens down in Wasilla. Zeke came on all the training runs with me. The longer we ran the happier he was. He fully blossomed into a healed and incredibly happy sled dog that year. He ate every meal in front of him and was always the very first one to wake up on a camp and rally the team in excited screams. He finished the Goose Bay 150 with me. Then he finished the Copper Basin 300 with me. After the Copper Basin, Al asked if Zeke wanted to do Iditarod with him. He did, of course.**

**I kept thinking Zeke would show up on the return dog list at one of the checkpoints. How could a shelter dog so sick turn into such a strong Iditarod athlete? But Zeke finished the entire race, along with all the other 15 dogs of Al's (back then the Iditarod was with 16 dog teams). Zeke turned two the day of the finishing banquet in Nome, and I snuck him some food from the festivities for his special birthday dinner. After the race, Zeke went back to being a full-blown house dog. In the summers, he'd often helicopter to remote Alaskan field sites with me for weeks at a time to hike over mountains collecting rock samples for my job in a geology lab.**

**This year, I am running my own rookie Iditarod after wanting to do it since I was 7. I let Zeke come along on early training runs in the fall to let him stretch his legs and be in a team again. I didn't think he'd easily give up his couch life for another season of hard training. Boy was I wrong. Zeke has been one of my driving forces this season, and he's one of my main go-to leaders. I trust him with my life. I'm beyond excited and honored to have him on my team, and I have full confidence that there's nothing he'd rather be doing.**

Kailyn ran a great race this year! After making it through the challenging ground blizzards and storms between White Mountain and Nome, Kailyn finished in 35th place. As a teacher, her message to students everywhere at the finish line was, "Just keep going. Push through anything that's challenging you. It's worth it on the other side."



# Year End Message

by: Jane Holmes

At the end of the school year, educators are always thinking about getting ahead for the next school year. Any small step for preparing for the next school year will be a big help come fall. Set yourself up for fall training today.

Have you considered using the [IditaRead](#) platform for any summer reading programs you may be running? Your account is always active; you just have to set up new classes and assignments. Or once you get your class list for next year – set up IditaRead to start in the fall. We will be working on version 3.0, so while you are on the page, enter your suggestions in the suggestion box at the top right of your account.

Over the summer, the Insider doesn't take a break, producing Insider 2.0. These videos offer your class the chance to visit mushers in the off-season and see what's going on around the kennel – and there are always puppies!! Your Insider subscription runs from July 1 to June 30. [Renew your education subscription](#) now for fall-ready video access all the way through Iditarod 2023.

If you are curious about how to become the [Iditarod Teacher on the Trail for 2024](#), you can find the description of the program and the application document on the EDU website. Applications are due December 1. Reflect on your practices from this year and use the summer to begin your application today!

Begin your school year with Iditarod tips and tricks starting in August. Join us for a half-day webinar full of ideas, suggestions, and lessons you need to use to start the school year. Join our "Starting Line" Webinar – August 2022. If you would like more information about the event, please submit your interest and information here: [August 2022 EDU Starting Line Webinar](#)



## Congratulations to our new Teacher on the Trail!

# Mark Your Calendar

May 10: Iditarod Board of Directors Meeting

June 8: Teacher on the Trail Alumni Weekly Summer Web Postings Begin

June 25: First Day to Sign-Up for the 2023 Iditarod

August: EDU Starting Line Webinar

Fall 2022: Second Iditarod Certified Educator Cohort Begins



## Newsletter Staff

**Editor:** Jen Reiter

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

Kailyn Davis

Kailyn Davis

Jim Deprez

Jen Reiter

Jane Holmes

Jeff Schultz

Heidi Sloan

Heidi Sloan

Jen Reiter

Jon Van Zyle

Mary Lynn Roush

Kelly Villar

Lynne Witte



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