

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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Photo by Jeff Schultz

The Start Line

by Jane Holmes

Well, you've brought your team to the start line of a new school year. Like the dogs in the photo above, some of your students are looking to you for guidance, some are patiently waiting, and some are slamming into the harness ready to go. Are you?

This year the newsletter will have the features you loved last year as well as some new ones. We have what you need to begin using the Iditarod to teach your lessons right now in a wide variety of academic areas. So, like a veteran musher, relax and take your "team" down the trail using tried and true methods.



September Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

Math

It's the beginning of the school year. Benchmark testing may have revealed a few of your students need a challenge beyond your grade level in math! Here is a lesson for 6th grade or older, or younger students who need enrichment. Learn more about [Celsius vs. Fahrenheit](#) temperatures and how to convert them. Geography and research of the mushers signed up for this year's Iditarod from various countries may also be found. Which ones use Celsius measures?

Iditarod Resources for Back to School and Literacy

As you begin to incorporate the Iditarod into your curriculum, this resource will give you some [Alaskan huskies](#) to use in decorating an Iditarod wall or [sled dog outlines](#) for allowing students to add equipment dogs use on the race as they learn about it: booties, dog coats, harnesses, etc.

Looking for Iditarod themed ideas for your classroom? Check out this article with an "[Iditarod Word of the Week](#)," bulletin boards and an Iditarod book box.

A Book to Add to your Library

From 4 year olds to 11 year olds, the book [Sled Dogs Run](#) contains information to captivate students. Use it as a springboard for locating figurative language and learning about how mushers train and equip their teams!



Sanka W. Dog's Zoom Lens Photo

This is the trophy given to the Iditarod champion. Race finishers invest many months of planning and hard work towards achieving a trip across the finish line. Use this photo as a jumping off point for a discussion of year long school goals and plans to achieve them. Click the photo for a larger image.

"Some (sleds) were a labor of love...Others were crude and basic...By the end of a race, they often looked alike...held together with wire, duct tape, and splints..."

~Joe May in "[Iditarod: The First Ten Years.](#)"



Photo: Terrie Hanke

Sneak Peek

Watching "First Day of School" photos pop up in my social media has me realizing that many districts across the country are already back in session. I have the luxury of holding on to summer a little longer and pushing back the fall prep since my school year begins after Labor Day. Don't be too envious - the tables turn in mid-June when I'm slogging through the final days and you've been relaxing by the pool since late May.

One thing I haven't put off is preparation for my year as the 2023 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™. Over the summer I worked out a plan to provide relevant content, new ways of thinking about Iditarod, and cohesive lesson plans. September is here and the time is right to kick off this journey.



by Juli Westrich

2023 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™

Here is what I have planned:

SEL Snacks: I want to share great lessons, AND honor the fact that I am a school librarian, not a classroom teacher. I see 40 classes, nearly 900 students every 6 days, for just 30 minutes at a time. This dynamic, paired with the real need for more intentional teaching around [Social-Emotional Learning](#) skills (a huge deficit due to the Covid years), will guide some of what I share this year. I plan to give SEL Snacks: bite-sized lessons that can be used by all teachers for morning meetings or community circles to encourage positive class dynamics and behaviors. These will be posted the first of each month. The September "snack" will focus on self-awareness, an essential building block for good social emotional health.

The "BIG" Lesson: Each month I'll have a full lesson plan ready - just add students! As the librarian, I work with teachers to support their content and curriculum. Collaborating with classroom teachers, we'll create lesson plans that support math, science, ELA, social studies, and more. On the 10th of each month a new lesson plan will be shared. If you are anxious to jump right in, don't forget to check the [IditarodEDU Teach & Learn](#) archives for lessons RIGHT NOW!

Another Acronym!: [The New York State Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education \(CR-SE\)](#) Framework provides support for educators to build a classroom community that values all learners. The Iditarod has amazing connections to inclusion, diversity, high expectations (rigor), and professional development - the pillars of CR-SE. It is my hope that these posts will provide some new entry points to traditional content. It'll be a long wait, but expect to see these posts on the 20th of the month.

One more thing....Library Learnings: Every post will have a quick note at the end that shares how Iditarod connects to the lessons I teach in the library. Take these ideas and run with them! Modify, adapt, or enhance the ideas to create lessons that fit your curriculum and classroom.

Finally, I'm extremely excited to get out on the trail! This is going to be a very exciting race year - running the Southern Route for the first time since 2019 (weather permitting, as always). I'm looking forward to sharing insight and ideas directly from the race checkpoints, and I can't wait to see the Burled Arch in Nome!

K9 Journalist Corner

by ZUMA



Hello Friends,

It's Zuma here!

The days are getting a little shorter and if you look around at the trees some leaves are changing from green to red and yellow. Then there's the fact that the weather up here in Alaska is cooling down considerably and teams are out behind 4-wheelers doing early season training. That for me is a sure sign of fall, and with fall, teachers and students head back to school!

I'm partnering up with my pal Sanka to share an idea to get you going as the school year begins. It's called **Living the Eight Traits of Iditarod**.

Sanka used **IDITAROD** as an acronym to come up with these eight traits and each trait has an Iditarod story demonstrating the trait. Click on the each trait to access Sanka's story and definition.

I = INNOVATION

D = DILIGENCE

I = INTEGRITY

T = TEAMWORK

A = ATTITUDE

R = RESPECT

O = OPTIMISM

D = DETERMINATION

Start the school year off with innovation. Read the story and brainstorm ways students can show innovation. At the close of the week discuss successful innovation strategies, then move on to diligence, etc. As students read the stories of mushers living the traits from past years, they learn not only what the trait is but they pick up bits and pieces of Iditarod history.

During the race, the students can focus on examples of each trait they see mushers demonstrate, then write stories for each trait from the current race.

Every month, Zuma is going to send you on a scavenger hunt within www.iditarod.com. This month Zuma sends you to **race archives**, the current **musher list** participating in the 51st Iditarod, and **Eye on the Trail** stories from the final days of the 2022 race.

Here's your scavenger hunt – Who are the two rookies who scratched between White Mountain and Nome in 2022 and have signed up to run the Iditarod in 2023? Can you find details about the nasty storm that caused six mushers to scratch between White Mountain and Nome? Which of the eight traits are these second year rookies demonstrating?

If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

Beginning in **October**, a student question will be answered in this article and Jon Van Zyle, official artist of the Iditarod, will create an original illustration for it.

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

Back to School for Sled Dogs

With the temperatures cooler through the night and early morning, the sled dogs and mushers are ready to head back to the trails to run. The excitement is seen and heard in the kennel.

Teachers and students are getting ready to start a new school year and so are the sled dogs. Checklists are made for the supplies needed and things to do. Mushers are taking out their gear and getting it ready. They check the ATV and dryland rigs. Ganglines, necklines, snaps, collars and harnesses are inspected for weaknesses that need to be replaced. Classrooms are checked for the desks, computers, and classroom supplies.

Each dog needs be checked for harness and collar sizing. Have the sizes or styles changed since spring? Students check their school clothing and shoes, while mushers checks the dog's collar, harnesses, and booties.

The musher has many goals and expectations for the first days and weeks of the season. Will they remember the commands gee, haw, easy, whoa! Will the dogs remember their hook up manners of no chewing necklines or barking at their partners? Educators are asking themselves will my students remember their skills from last year? Will we need to review curriculum from the previous grade? Will the classroom behavior rules be recalled?

Will the older experienced leaders and team dogs still be ready to run? Are the young dogs ready to step into the role as teammates and leaders? Are the experienced teachers ready to mentor the new teachers?

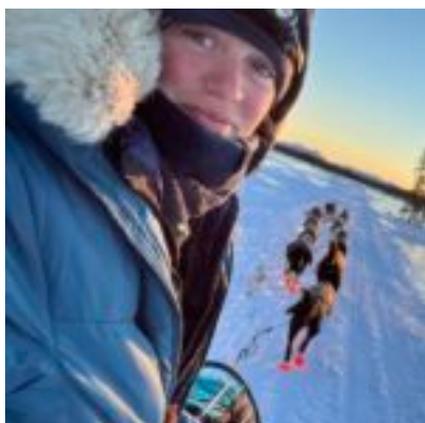


Solving Zuma's Scavenger Hunt

Who are the two rookies who scratched between White Mountain and Nome in 2022 and have signed up to run the Iditarod in 2023? Can you find details about the nasty storm that caused six mushers to scratch between White Mountain and Nome?

Access the **Race Archives** under the Race Center tab of www.iditarod.com. In race archives, select the 2022 race and scroll to the **Withdrawn/Scratched** list. To find out where the musher scratched, click on the musher's name and you'll be directed to their personal standings for 2022. Compare the rookies who scratched in 2022 in White Mountain to the list of the 2023 mushers located under the **Musher** tab of the menu bar. View the musher roster as a list. You'll find that Kattijo Deeter and Bridgett Watkins, who scratched in White Mountain, are returning to the 2023 Iditarod as second year rookies.

To read about the horrific storm that caused Kattijo and Bridgett to scratch, select the **Eye on the Trail** button from the menu on the right hand side of the Iditarod main page. You'll find articles entitled "Mother Nature Rules," "Riley Dyche Makes Nome" and "The Shelter Cabin Crew" that share experiences of the blow hole storm that caused six mushers to scratch within 77 miles of Nome.



As an additional piece of Iditarod history, you may wish to read about the blow hole storm of 2014 that caused Jeff King to scratch and Aliy Zirkle to take shelter at Safety. Dallas Seavey came into Nome thinking he was third, only to find out he was the Champion!



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Next Race	182 Days	17 Hrs	24 Mins	58 Secs
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September 7 - 2023 Trail Mail Art Contest Begins

September 14 - Starting Line Webinar

November 2 - 2023 Trail Mail Art Contest Designs due

November 9 - 2023 Trail Mail Sales Begin

November 30 - Last day for musher registration at regular entrance fee

December 1 - 2024 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail Applications Due

March 1 - 3, 2023 - Iditarod Education Department Educator's Conference, Anchorage, Alaska

Sled Dog of the Month

by Kelly Villar

Welcome back to the 2022-2023 school year!

To start this year, we visit mushers from the 2022 Iditarod. We start by taking a trip to Crooked Creek Kennel in Ester, AK to meet Joshua McNeal and his special dog Jenna.

“Jenna is the dog that holds the most special place in my heart. She has always been my go-to leader and is considered the kennel princess. She is one of the most intelligent dogs I have ever been around, and half the time, she knows what I am thinking before I do. She has had three litters of puppies for the kennel and has completed Iditarod multiple times. Now at eight years old, she is getting ready to compete in her final Iditarod before permanently retiring to the couch. My favorite memory of Jenna was the Kobuk 440 in 2019. The trail that year was extremely hard and fast, and several teams, including myself, had to return dogs to Kotzebue due to minor injuries. She had been leading the entire race with my other leader Suka. On the way to the last checkpoint, we had to run over some bare tundra, and Suka ended up tweaking her shoulder, so I had to return her at the last checkpoint. With 55 miles to go in the race, and only six dogs left, Jenna single led the rest of the race and took us to a 9th place finish. I am super sad that she is retiring this year, but her athleticism and intelligence have been passed down through her puppies, and her spirit and drive will be on the trail for years to come.”

The 2022 Iditarod was Josh’s second Iditarod. He scratched in Galena for the best interest of his team. His first race was in 2021, where he finished in 28th position. Stay tuned to see if we will see Joshua McNeal on the trail for 2023. Musher sign-up started June 25th and goes through the end of November.

Photos: Josh McNeal



Josh McNeal and Jenna



Jenna



Jenna

Mandatory Gear

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 school year will be a big help come fall. Set yourself up for fall training today!

Have you updated or registered your [Iditaread](#) account yet? Existing accounts are still active; you just need to change your classes and assignments.

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 past years and use them to begin your application today!

Begin your school year with Iditarod now. On September 14, join us for a **FREE** one hour webinar full of ideas, suggestions, and lessons you need to start the school year. Find more information and register here: ["Starting Line" Webinar](#).



Newsletter Staff

Editors:

Linda Fenton
Jane Holmes

Photography:

all by Iditarod.com
unless otherwise credited

Contributing Writers:

Terrie Hanke
Heidi Sloan
Kelly Villar
Juli Westrich
Lynne Witte



Newsletter feedback, questions, or suggestions?
email: jane.holmes@iditarod.com

