

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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photo: Terrie Hanke

Next Steps

by Jane Holmes

Fall training has begun for mushers everywhere. While runs are still primarily on dry ground instead of snow, these runs are important steps to building up stamina, endurance, strength, and a positive attitude for the rest of the training season.

Now that you have established schedules, curriculum, and classroom management, take the next steps to "train" your students in all things Iditarod. Use our themed lessons to meet your required objectives and engage even the most reluctant learners while providing them a solid background about the race so they are ready for race season and learning!

Check out our new features, "Kennel Connections" and a **FREE** Insider video clip each month in "Mandatory Gear".



A Tribute to Lance Mackey - Musher Extraordinaire!

If there were a musher Mt. Rushmore carved into the towering rock walls that guide the Yukon River, surely Lance Mackey would be included. The legendary and iconic Mackey, a winner of eight 1,000 mile races, passed away in early September at the age of 52.

Lance was born into a mushing family. Dick, his father, and brothers Rick and Jason are all Iditarod veterans. Dick and Rick are champions. Each earned Iditarod gold in his sixth race wearing bib number 13. Lance would be running his 6th Iditarod in 2007. Back in those days, the first musher to sign up had the first choice of bib numbers. In June, he camped at Iditarod Headquarters for an entire week prior to the first day of musher sign-up so he could be at the front of the line. The family tradition held up as Lance won his first Iditarod on his sixth attempt wearing bib #13.

Lance experienced way more than his share of challenging times. School just wasn't his thing. He's experienced drug abuse, addiction and treatment. The lump he discovered on his neck during the 2001 race was stage four throat cancer. The devastating surgery was followed by a long complicated recovery. During the 2008 All-Alaska Sweepstakes, a snowmachiner hit Mackey's sled and seriously injured his famed dog Zorro. Mackey lost his partner, Jenne Smith, in a 4-wheeler accident in the fall of 2020. And then in 2021 a new cancer invaded his throat.

Liken the path of Lance's life to the Iditarod trail and you'd have a rutted trail down the Happy River Steps, an icy rock strewn snow starved Dalzell Gorge, a snowless Farewell Burn, heavy snowfall between Ophir and Anvik, strong headwinds on the Yukon coupled with warm temperatures and soft trail, coastal ground blizzards on the way to Koyuk, and gale force winds in the blowhole. A determined Mackey would find his way through it all and savor the time with his dogs.

His dogs brought him through the darkest times of his life. He lived for his dogs. When things got tough, Mackey was just a little tougher. He figured out ways to work smarter so he could keep on working with dogs. Because not working with dogs was unthinkable.

Love and understanding flowed both ways between Lance and his dogs. Mackey's dogs were welcome in the house and would often choose to sleep on his bed. If at bedtime Zorro, Larry, Lippy, Handsome, Maple or Rev occupied the bed, then Lance would grab a blanket and sleep on the floor. He said, "They deserve the comfort more than I do."

In 2005 as a Yukon Quest rookie, he was crowned champion. He won the next three to make it four Quest wins in a row. In 2007 he won his first Iditarod. He won the next three to claim four consecutive Iditarod crowns. He's the only person to have that distinction. Mackey won both the Quest and the Iditarod in 2007 and 2008! Impossible for anyone except Lance Mackey.

In 2008, Mackey as the first musher to arrive in McGrath, Lance received the PenAir Spirit of Alaska Award. The award symbolizes the spirit of the dogs and the musher becoming one through the Iditarod. There are no truer words than these to describe Lance Mackey!

Lance, may you rest in peace as your legacy lives on through your family, your fellow mushers, those you have mentored, your fans, and the bloodlines of your canine athletes.

The unabridged Mackey tribute can be read at Iditarod.com in Eye on the Trail.

[Eye on the Trail: Remembering Lance](#)



DeeDee Jonrowe
at Happy Trails Kennels

October Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

STEM - Tinker Boxes

Sometimes our students just need to build and create using their brains and hands. This lesson gives teachers great ideas to have "tinker boxes" ready for STEM activities which can overlap with learning about the Iditarod!

[Tinkering Along the Trail](#)

Looking Ahead to Veteran's Day

Mushers often have a passion for more than just sledding with dog teams. Many use their fame or success to help various charities or groups of people. Read about this musher who works to encourage veterans. The lesson will also give you ideas to incorporate with your students.

[Honoring Our Veterans and the Iditarod Connection](#)

Persuasion Through Commercials and the Iditarod

Older students will analyze persuasive messages and rhetoric through commercials. They will learn to craft arguments in order to persuade. Try this Iditarod-based lesson to allow your students to create and persuade through commercials!

[Exploring Persuasive Techniques Through Television](#)

Reading

Are you struggling to motivate students to read? Try this article that has high interest about testing the sled dogs' urine! From there, students can continue researching other sports that use similar drug testing.

[Pee Collection? Yes, Pee Collection](#)



Sanka W. Dog's Zoom Lens Photo

In 2018, Meredith Mapes sent a lighter sled ahead to McGrath and changed out sleds before leaving. Take a look at this photo. Do you think she'll get it all in the sled? What mandatory gear can you spot?

"Redington spoke of how people in the villages no longer were running dogs...that seemed like a big loss to him, and he began to dream of a dog race from Anchorage to Nome."

~Joe and Norma Delia

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



Photo: Terrie Hanke

Sneak Peek

There is a chill in the early morning air, students start the day with sweatshirts (which mid-day find their way to the floor, under desks, left on playgrounds, and stuffed in lockers), and we start to embrace pumpkin décor. Then, just as we think we can't possibly make it through another full week of school, the second Monday in October is upon us, and with it the great gift of an extra day off. Whether we view this holiday as patriotic or problematic, it does provide an ideal entry point to discuss the Indigenous communities of North America. How does this relate to Iditarod? It is no secret that the Iditarod National Historic Trail, and the race itself, crosses the lands of the Athabaskan, Iñupiaq, and Yup'ik/Cup'ik peoples. And, although the exploration of Alaska by western cultures took place long after Columbus, it greatly impacted the culture, language, and way of life for the Indigenous residents. October provides an opportunity to engage in critical thinking about our local - and Iditarod - relationships to the native peoples of North America.



by **Juli Westrich**

2023 Iditarod

Teacher on the Trail™



Social Emotional Learning this month will move towards Self-Management, learning how to deal with the big emotions identified back in September. Last fall 2020/2021 Teacher on the Trail Jim Deprez shared an amazing lesson plan on the [10 Universal Native Values](#). I'll explore these Native Values through the lens of self-management.

Many institutions have created land acknowledgements that honor the Indigenous peoples of the region on which they live, learn, and work. My school district has one, as does the Iditarod. A Lesson Plan mid-October will coincide with **Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples' Day** and provide an opportunity to investigate how a land acknowledgement can ensure we honor and remember Indigenous contributions to our communities, and to the Iditarod.

Towards the end of the month I'll be tossing out ideas to incorporate resources by traditionally marginalized voices that offer some new perspectives around food and celebration - perfect for that next big holiday in late November. Culturally responsive lessons include a variety of histories, languages, and experiences to reflect diversity. Using the **connections of Iditarod to the Indigenous peoples** and the great resources from the Alaska Native Heritage Center can reinvigorate classroom discussions around food, family, and gathering together.

K9 Journalist Corner

by Gypsy



Thin food for the musher

photo: Heidi Sloan



Frozen salmon for the dogs cut with a band saw

photo: Shaynee Traska



An interesting warm soup of kibble and meat for sled dogs

photo: Heidi Sloan

Dear Friends,

Gypsy, canine reporter, here! Right now, mushers are beginning fall training runs with me and my sled dog friends. We need to keep in shape! Another task to begin is planning dog food and musher food for the Iditarod. Dog food is expensive, but easier to gather. We dogs need high performance, dry dog kibble, as well as frozen hunks of salmon and various meats. This good food can be stored in bins or in the freezer until it is time to send it out in drop bags. Our mushers are permitted to send three 50 lb. bags to each checkpoint. This keeps the sled lighter, and we have a stash of food to replenish the sled at each stop.

The human mushers have a more difficult time gathering their food. "Running dogs has taught me to pack food and drinks that don't freeze," said Charlie Jordan, a Jr. Iditarod champion in *Lessons My Sled Dog Taught Me* [Brown, 1998]. Have you ever thought about what the mushers drink while on the Iditarod? Some take Capri Sun™ juice packs. Guess what happens? Yes! They freeze into solid ice if the musher doesn't plan ahead. Some mushers keep their juice pouches tucked into interior pockets of their parkas, near their bodies. The juice packets are merely slushy when they go to drink, which is better than frozen solid! Water bottles can also be carried near body heat to remain drinkable.

For people, musher Michael Baker says thin foods are best, like slices of pizza or thin burritos. These meals can be shrink wrapped and then dropped into hot water to thaw a little so nobody breaks a tooth trying to eat.

So, the next time you are having a warm after-school snack, think about mushers on the Iditarod Trail trying to keep their food and drinks thawed enough to eat!

Until next time,
Gypsy

If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

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

Ms. Reinhart's 4th grade, Rilke Schule

How does a musher pick which dogs to take on a race?

When choosing the dogs to start a race as a team, the musher/teacher/coach has many factors to consider. The decision of which dog to take is important to how the team will place and finish the race.

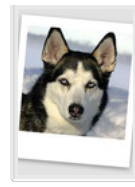
All year round the musher is caring for the health and well being of their dogs. They want to ensure the dogs' attitudes, body condition, and general health and diet are top quality. Fall training begins when temperatures drop and it's cool enough for longer runs. Now, mushers might begin like putting together a kickball team at school recess: They are the team captains and will choose balanced teams of male/female dogs, differing age levels, and different team positions.

After a few training runs, like the recess games of balance, mushers may then divide dogs into multiple teams: A, B, and C. Like a high school sports team, they have a varsity, JV, and freshman team. As training progresses, lengthening distances and checkpoint routines are practiced, and the dogs may move to a different team as they gain experience. Some dogs, like students, excel quicker while some may need more reteaching. This is when the mushers shift the dogs among training teams. They will look for healthy dogs and partner them with dogs who have a similar gait (trot or lope) when running and which are a similar size. It is also important to have partners who can get along.

A musher running the Iditarod or other races will choose dogs that are healthy, well-trained for miles and routines, and have an attitude that works best for the overall race goal.



Zuma's Scavenger Hunt: Mandatory Items



Hello Friends,

It's Zuma here! Does everyone like a scavenger hunt? How about an Iditarod Scavenger Hunt? This month we are going into the rules to learn about mandatory equipment. Musherers are required to carry several important items in the sled throughout the race. Lose a piece of mandatory equipment and it's either get it replaced immediately or be disqualified. It's important stuff!

What must the mushers carry as Mandatory Equipment? When you find the list in the rules, speculate on why each item is required. Would there be a single most important piece of mandatory equipment?

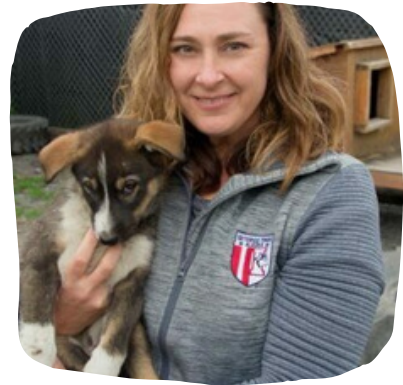
Next, come up with your own list of mandatory equipment for your school day, for athletic practices, for music lessons or for a sleepover at a friend's house. Keep in mind that your mandatory equipment isn't limited to physical items. To be the best you can be, what traits will you need?

**Have fun as you learn more about the equipment mushers must have in their possession at all times!
(The answer is on the last page of newsletter.)**



In 1999, "Finney" Aufderheyde (L) began the Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™ program that is in its 25th year.

**Will you be part of
the legacy?**



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, 2022. Reflect on your practices from past years and use them to begin your application today!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Next Race	152 Days	00 Hrs	59 Mins	24 Secs
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November 2 - 2023 Trail Mail Art Contest Designs due

November 9 - 2023 Trail Mail Sales Begin

November 22 - IditaRider Auction Begins

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

**December 1 - 2024 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail Applications
Due**

**February 28 - March 3, 2023 - Iditarod Education Department
Educators Conference, Anchorage, Alaska**

Sled Dog of the Month

by Kelly Villar

On September 7, 2022, the Iditarod community lost a legend, Lance Mackey. Lance Mackey was an amazing musher that showed everyone the true meaning of perseverance. He raced in 16 Iditarods with six top10 finishes. Of the 6, he finished first in four consecutive Iditarods. On top of his successes in the Iditarod, Lance also finished first in four Yukon Quests.

I was honored to meet Lance Mackey at the 2019 and the 2020 Iditarod. When I reached out to him about a dog that holds a special place in his heart, he introduced me to Maple. Here is what he had to say about Maple:

"I have a now-retired leader, Maple. She was the 2010 Golden Harness winner in Iditarod at just 3 yrs old and ran most of the race in single lead in a variety of weather and trail conditions. This was the first time the team was without an all-star leader and 3-time winner (07-09) and Golden Harness winner, her uncle, Larry.

She was so good at what she did and was proud to show her stuff. She was a quiet, almost shy girl in the yard, but start up a wheeler or break out a sled, and she came alive! Maple is smaller in size next to most of her teammates, but in harness, she was in charge, confident, loud, eager, and would jump as high as possible, not liking to wait to go.

She seemed to always question me. Being a picky eater, she would often look at me at feeding time like, "you try it first" or "what's that? I don't like it". At times when training, I would ask her to go or do something, or give her a command, and she would reply — hesitation and a look of "I don't want to go that way" or "really dad?" and maybe even totally ignore me. But in racing, she was almost perfect in every way. Unfortunately, at the young age of 6, she decided racing wasn't fun anymore. We hung up her harness, and she now lives out her life on the couch. She has had several litters of pups, and today, many are on other teams, and many are still in our kennel."

Lance Mackey will truly be missed.



photo: Lance Mackey



photo: Lance Mackey

Kennel Connections

by Jane Holmes

This summer, I reached out to some mushers that I have recently had conversations with about the Iditarod Education Department and asked if they would like to support the EDU by allowing me a visit to their kennels to get fresh, new information and pictures so we can provide you with relevant materials. I received an overwhelming positive response. Each month I will highlight the kennel of a past champion or musher signed up for the 2023 race, share photos, and give lesson ideas and prompts that each visit sparked.

Trailbreaker Kennel, Fairbanks, Alaska

(Susan Butcher)

home of Dave Monson, and Tekla and Choochy Butcher Monson

Trailbreaker Kennel is along the banks of the Chena River, a beautiful setting on the southwest side of Fairbanks. They were generous with their time, attention, and information. They shared some mottos they have for their kennel and the one that resonated most with me for educators is **"Trust and be trusted."** How simple it sounds, but trust is something that is gained, not given. It takes time and it takes shared experiences - both positive and negative to forge trust. One definition of trust is: to believe in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of

My classroom practice is to trust students and their word unless they show otherwise. And I tell my students, "Trust me on this." If either of us slips up, we apologize and start over. Use these kennel photos, some personal family photos that Tekla trusted to the EDU, and discussion/writing prompts in this document [TrailBreaker Kennel - "Trust and Be Trusted"](#) - to build and establish a community of trust in your classroom and school. Click on an image to make it larger.



photo: Butcher-Monson family



photo: Butcher-Monson family



photo: Butcher-Monson family



photo: Butcher-Monson family

Mandatory Gear

by Jane Holmes



Click on this image to watch a **FREE Insider clip** of Brent Sass's Iditarod win in 2022. Use the video as a jumping off point for discussions about trust, setting goals and hard work.

Each month, Jon Van Zyle sketches an original artwork to accompany an article in the newsletter. Click on this image to see the **original Jon Van Zyle sketches** still available for purchase. Proceeds support the Iditarod Education Department Teacher on the Trail™ program.



Celebrate our return to the **Southern Route** by learning more details of Iditarod, Anvik, Shageluk, Grayling, and Eagle Island. Clicking on this image will take you to Sanka W. Dog's Virtual Journey of **Iditarod**.

Enter the **2023 Trail Mail Design Contest!** Entries due November 1. Read more by clicking on the image to the right.



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Zuma's Scavenger Hunt - Solution

Go to the Race Center tab on Iditarod.com then select 2023 Information for Mushers. Open the 2023 Race Rules PDF. Mandatory items are listed in Rule #16 located on page 8.

Newsletter feedback, questions, or suggestions?
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