

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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## Moving Down the Trail

by Jane Holmes

If your school year was aligned with miles on the Iditarod Trail, you'd have your "team" nearing the checkpoint of Nikolai by now. Class rhythms are humming, team personalities are meshing, students are showing their strengths and "training" to improve in other areas, and you can stand on the runners and watch your team travel awhile without having to manage every movement.

But don't let monotony set in - harness the power of the Iditarod to engage and inspire your students! Keep them enthusiastic about learning with this month's lessons and ideas.



## November Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

### Literacy

If your students are continuing to struggle with reading strategies and grammar, a fall-out from the COVID learning years, here are two lessons combined with the Iditarod that should help them focus on learning these concepts.

#### [Inferring With the Iditarod Air Force](#)

#### [Parts of Speech and the Iditarod](#)

### STEM

We all know that the Iditarod helps engage our learners. When you want to give your students hands-on learning opportunities, try these two STEM projects. Your class will learn math and problem solving as they create!

#### [STEM Sugar Cube Dog Houses](#)

#### [STEM with Northern Dog Adaptations](#)



### Sanka W. Dog's Zoom Lens Photo

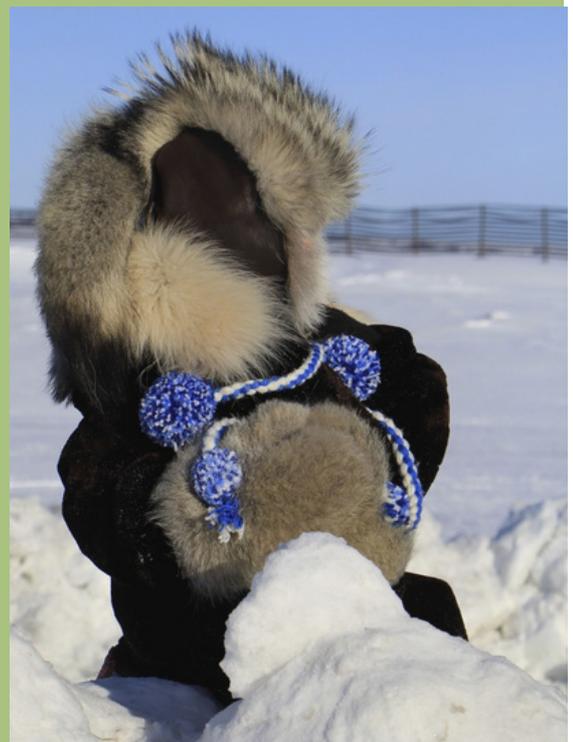
Inside this parky is a serious Iditarod race fan. One of the best ways to stay warm in the Arctic is to mimic the animals that live there and wear fur.

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Ten yards from the finish line, (in 1977) Rick Swenson. made a lovely gesture. He halted his team, stumbled along beside them and almost hugged the remaining daylight out of his lead dogs, Old Buddy and Andy.

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~London Daily Mail in  
"Iditarod: The First Ten Years."



Click on the image to enlarge it. Photo: Terrie Hanke

# Sneak Peek

*November always seems to fly by. The month only has 30 days to begin with and then we celebrate the Veteran's Day holiday, add in a parent conference day, and the 5 day weekend for Thanksgiving; before we know it snowflakes are flying, and radio stations are playing holiday hits 24-7. How to make the most of this short month? Be grateful for every moment.*

*Clearly Thanksgiving influences the theme this month: a focus on gratitude. Often students focus on appreciating "things"(as they should). However, the Iditarod can broaden the concept, expanding gratitude to people and the environment. Iditarod teaches us to acknowledge the time and talents others share with us in this beautiful world.*



by Juli Westrich

2023 Iditarod

Teacher on the Trail™

**SEL Snacks:** For our SEL "snack" we will concentrate on Social Awareness, a key component of which is "understanding and expressing gratitude." We can define gratitude with students, but the challenge is helping them really see and acknowledge the contributions of others. Often the focus is solely on expressing thanks, but part of this SEL area is about receiving appreciation from others. Iditarod volunteers are some of the most generous and kind people I've ever had the great fortune to work with. A humble group, they're not particularly good at receiving praise. We want our students to notice and acknowledge others' work with gratitude, but also to accept praise and enjoy that warm glow of their contributions.

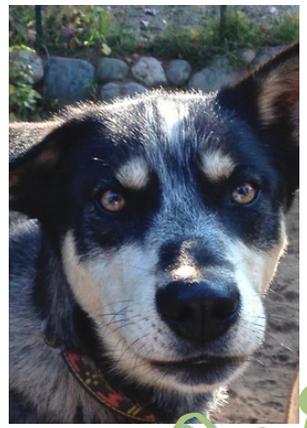


Brent Sass is grateful for the fans and volunteers who support his team and Iditarod.  
Brent Sass coming into Koyuk, Photo Credit: Iditarod

The **lesson plan** this month will continue to focus on "understanding and expressing gratitude" with insight from 2022 Iditarod Champion Brent Sass and an Indigenous Voices guided read-aloud. The Iditarod happens because of hundreds of volunteers. Our schools function thanks to many people behind the scenes, too. By examining the many facets of Iditarod volunteerism, students will make correlations to some of the lesser known contributors in their school that positively influence their learning experience.

## K9 Journalist Corner

by Sled Dog Ed



*Sled Dog Ed*

Dear Teachers,

November is a month commonly associated with **“thankfulness”**. There are multiple times during the month to highlight this concept. There is Election Day, Veterans’ Day, and ultimately Thanksgiving Day. Each brings with it a host of ways to express thankfulness.

The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race also exhibits the theme of thankfulness throughout the year, whether it be preparing for the event, the actual race, post-race time or all the behind the scenes work done by numerous volunteers. Educators are also thankful for the numerous possibilities this race offers them to motivate students while integrating them within their classrooms and curriculum. We are thankful for the Director of Iditarod Education, Jane Holmes, our former Teachers on the Trail, the present Teacher on the Trail, Julianne Westrich, our K9 Journalists, and the multitude of information provided for teachers located on the Iditarod Education Website.

Students are appreciative of and thankful for new learning. They love facts and trivia! Why not entice them with some of this during the day in your classroom? Here is an idea that can be used as a time filler, a classroom/team competition or an individual scavenger hunt type of project. The ultimate goal is to provide an opportunity for your students to use the Iditarod website or the Iditarod Education website as they gather information about the race, its checkpoints, mushers, record holders, and much more.

Students will be given seven separate clues relating to a specific category. They must come up with the answers for each clue using their background knowledge or the Iditarod website. If you choose to do this as a team competition, divide your class into two teams. Inform the first team of their category. Give each clue within that category, one at a time, and keep track of how many correct answers the team has given. Move onto the next team and repeat the process. You can decide how to reward the team that receives the most correct answers.

If you choose to have your students do this activity individually or with a partner, then display the category to the whole class along with the clues. Have your students work throughout the day, either in pairs or individually, to come up with the answers. Share the results during an Iditarod Fact and Trivia time at the end of the day.

**Continued on next page**

Let's look at an example!

**Category: Female Mushers**

Clue #1 First woman to finish the Iditarod (Mary Shields)

Clue #2 Musher who usually wore pink (DeeDee Jonrowe)

Clue #3 Rookie of the Year 2022 (Hanna Lyrek)

Clue #4 First female winner (Libby Riddles)

Clue #5 First woman to win four races (Susan Butcher)

Clue #6 The twins Kristy and Anna Berington)

Clue #7 The quickest Red Lantern Winner (Cindy Abbott)

Ready for another one?

**Category: Checkpoints**

Clue #1 First checkpoint after the start of the race (Yentna Station)

Clue #2 Popular checkpoint for 24 hour mandatory layover (McGrath)

Clue #3 Happy River Steps are navigated on the way to this checkpoint (Rainy Pass)

Clue #4 First checkpoint on the Bering Coast (Unalakleet)

Clue #5 Will cross the Blueberry Hills on the way to this checkpoint (Shaktoolik)

Clue #6 Last mandatory 8 hour layover (White Mountain)

Clue #7 End of the Iditarod race (Nome)

Encourage your students to write their own categories and clues using the information from the Iditarod website or the Iditarod Education website. Be thankful for their creativity and perseverance.

Have fun and thanks for all you do to make the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race part of your students' educational day!

Fondly,

Sled Dog Ed

# If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

This month's question comes from...

Lexi in Mrs. Holtkamp's 5th grade

**How does a musher know how much food to pack for her dogs?**



Packing for the Iditarod is one of the biggest preparations a musher needs to make for their team. The musher knows they need to carry enough food to get their team to the next checkpoint. PLUS they need to pack spare meals and snacks in case a storm or other concerns slow their progress. There are even times that an extra rest or campout for the team's well being is needed.

Sled dogs' health and nutrition are very important to the mushers. The average running sled dog will eat about 10,000 calories a day. A musher will pack quality kibble along with frozen meats like beef, chicken, salmon, chicken skins, and pork to be used as training snacks or in prepared warm meals.

Iditarod mushers will practice what they need for their team. Each training run, as well as the shorter races they run, are used as practice to prepare for which foods and what amounts their individual dogs and team needs. They will bring extra food and snacks until they figure out the needs of the dogs. Of course, it can change with temperatures. Dogs tend to prefer fattier food when it's cold and leaner meats when it's warmer just like humans.

Dog food preparation for the Iditarod includes sending out more than needed. A variety of snacks and frozen meat options and extra food is important.

If you have a question for our "If You Mush Know" feature, email it to: Jane Holmes, Education Director, at [jane.holmes@iditarod.com](mailto:jane.holmes@iditarod.com)

# Zuma's Scavenger Hunt - a Third Rookie Returns

Here's an update on the September scavenger hunt. The question then was - Who are the two rookies who scratched between White Mountain and Nome in 2022 who have signed up to run the 2023 Iditarod? Update the question to read - Who are the THREE rookies who scratched between White Mountain and Nome in 2022 who have signed up to run the 2023 Iditarod?

Have you researched the nasty storm that caused six mushers to scratch between White Mountain and Nome?

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

**Next Race** 129 02 30 50  
Days Hrs Mins Secs

**November 1 - 2023 Trail Mail Art Contest Designs due**

**November 3 - 2023 Trail Mail Sales Begin**

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

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

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

**March 2, 2023 - Musher Banquet Gala**

## Traveling Quilt Project Update

The Iditarod Quilt Project is back for the 2022-2023 school year! This year there will be eight quilts traveling across the country from school to school. Each quilt is unique and teaches students all about the race—from inspirational quotes to character development, the quilts make a great addition to any Iditarod classroom! To register to receive a quilt this year, click here and if you have questions about the program, contact Annie at [iditarodquiltproject@gmail.com](mailto:iditarodquiltproject@gmail.com).

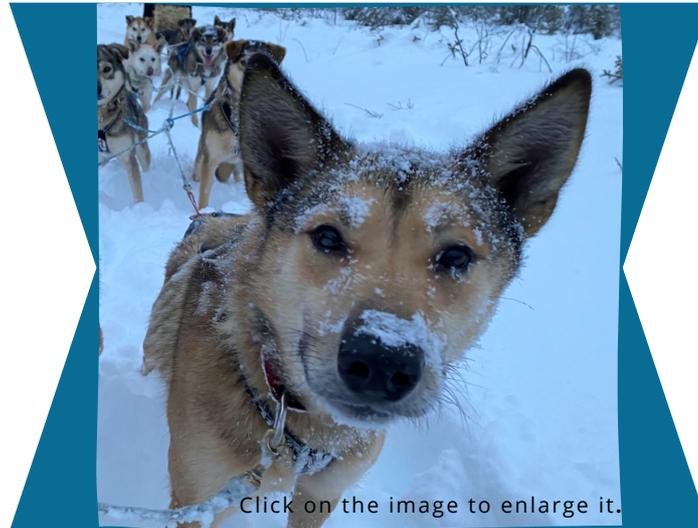


Musher Wade Marrs signing a quilt during the 2018 Iditarod at the Shaktoolik checkpoint where teacher Linda Bekoalok was volunteering.

# Sled Dog of the Month

by Kelly Villar

This month we meet Deke Naaktgeboren from Nautique Sky Kennel in Fairbanks, Alaska. Deke ran his first Iditarod in 2020, finishing in 27th place. In 2022 he ran his second Iditarod, finishing in 29th place. Choosing one special dog is always a hard question. Each dog holds a special place in the musher's heart. When I asked Deke, he introduced us to Jasmine. Here is what he had to say:



Click on the image to enlarge it.

***“That dog would be Jasmine. The Queen of the Kennel! She’s five years old and has been my main leader since she led the entire Yukon Quest 1000 as a two-year-old. In that race we encountered an epic storm atop Eagle Summit, the crux of the race, and our team went out in the storm with Jasmine in the solo lead. We couldn’t see up or down, left or right, but somehow, Jazz got us caught up to a group of 3 other mushers. The other mushers heard me haw and geeing Jazmine and started calling her name. She followed their voices until we were right behind the now 4 team train of dog sled teams. Made it up and over Eagle Summit and into the checkpoint!*”**

***The following year on Iditarod, being part of the Elim 11, we were last to leave Elim. The trail on little McKinley started to vanish, and we eventually passed four teams until the trail was completely gone. Then, with Jasmine in lead, we had four teams following her and were, somehow once again, able to find the trail until our half of the Elim 11 caught up with the other half. A few mushers following even thanked her!*”**

***She’s started in lead every single race since 2018, she’s never had to be dropped, and she often has free range of the dog yard patrolling to ensure each and every dog knows she’s in charge!*”**

***She started as my main leader in the 2022 Iditarod! PRINCESS Jasmine!”***

To learn more about Deke Naatgeboren and Nautique Sky Kennel, visit his website at [Nautique Sky Kennel](#)

He has a great story about another special dog Nautique and how his kennel was started.

# Mandatory Gear

by Jane Holmes

***Here are the "must have" resources you need:***

Click on this image to view this month's **FREE** Insider clip. Have your students write about it from the point of view of one of the dogs.



[Iditaread](#) - digital literacy tracking platform Iditarod style. Students move along the Iditarod Trail as they achieve the literacy goals you set.

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!



**Season 6 Episode 1 of Husky Talk is now available.**

In this episode we recap last year's race and talk about how Iditarod is preparing for the 2023 race.

Click on the image to go to the Husky Talk page of the Iditarod Education Department website.

## ZUMA'S SCAVENGER HUNT ANSWER

Access the Race Archives under the Race Center tab of [iditarod.com](http://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 to 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 Gerhardt Thiar has now signed up, joining Kattijo Deeter and Bridgett Watkins as second year rookies. All three, who scratched in White Mountain due to the blowhole storm, are returning to the 2023 Iditarod to reach their goal of Nome.

To read about the horrific storm that caused Gerhardt, Kattijo and Bridgett to scratch, go to Eye on the Trail stories published on March 19th-20th of 2022.

# Kennel Connections

by Jane Holmes

This month's featured kennel is

## [Black Spruce Dog Sledding](#), Fairbanks, Ak

home of Iditarod mushers Jeff and Kattijo Deeter

My visit there was nothing short of magical and there were so many lesson ideas, it was hard to choose just one for this article. But the dogs made one idea clear to me - **communication**. Dogs, like people, communicate through body language and vocalizations. We know our language, and dogs know theirs. Use these video, and photo resources along with this document:

**["Black Spruce Dog Sledding - Canine Communication"](#)** for lesson ideas on body language, expressing feelings, and communication.

Click on each image to make it larger.

1.



2.



3. Frito

4. Tolvi

5. Anderson

6.



7.



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