

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

NEWS & FEATURES

December Teaching Ideas

PAGE 2

Sanka W. Dog's Zoom
Lens Photo

PAGE 2

"If You Mush Know"
& Jon Van Zyle Art

PAGE 3

"Mandatory Gear"

PAGE 4

Sneak Peek from the
Teacher on the Trail™

PAGE 5

Zuma's Scavenger
Hunt

PAGE 6

Sled Dog of the Month

PAGE 7

K9 Journalist Corner

PAGE 8

Calendar

PAGE 9



It's All Coming Together

Your classroom is a harmonious blend of many components: students, teachers, curriculum, environment, requirements, enrichment, etc. In the same way, the Iditarod race has numerous components that need to join seamlessly for it to succeed: logistics, mushers, dogs, volunteers, trail maintenance, banquets, etc.

Our lessons are designed to fit right into what you already do - to complement your teaching. You'll find that what we have for you to use brightens the learning environment and adds authenticity to the skills that your students are already practicing. The Iditarod theme buoys interest and enthusiasm for both learners and educators. Harness the excitement of the holiday season. Choose a couple of this month's activities and feel the energy in your classroom rise.



December Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

Literacy

Teachers know that additional motivation to read is now needed more than ever. If you haven't started IditaRead yet, check out this tool to encourage your kids to read!

[IditaRead Digital](#)

Burled Arch with STEM

As your students learn more about the Iditarod, Nome and the finish line will be an important part of the picture. Students read about the first race and the Kool-Aid that marked the finish line. The vision and then the creation of the burled arch history can then lead to students building their own arch. This lesson provides high engagement and critical thinking.

[The Burled Arch](#)
[Reaching the Finish Line](#)

Stop Gap Animation with the Iditarod

We all know that our kids are computer savvy. Why not let them learn as they create through this lesson across Alaska using stop gap animation? Check out this amazing lesson!

[Finding Your Way in the Far North](#)

Art

Allowing students to be creative while also reading about the Iditarod is the gist of this lesson. Students learn how the finishers' belt buckle came to be and get to design one of their own.

[The Finisher's Belt Buckle](#)

Sanka W. Dog's Zoom Lens Photo

The Berington Twins had the most colorful gang line at this Iditarod start! Musher's often make their own lines. Andy Pohl, Kristi Berington's husband created the gang lines. Do some research to find out what the gang line is for. What role does it play for the dogs pulling the sled?



Herbie (Nayokpuk) told me that once in awhile you need to stop, enjoy what is around you, play, and then get back to business. "Life is too short to be worried all the time." he said.

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



Click on the image to enlarge it.

Photo: Terrie Hanke

If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

How does a musher teach "gee/haw" commands to their dogs?

This month's question comes from...

Have a question for a musher? Send it to:

jane.holmes@iditarod.com



Leaving the starting line of a sled dog race the team is off and down the trail. Like the game "Follow the Leader", the team is following the leaders in front.

Mushers must rely on verbal commands to control their team to safely get down the trail. The musher will use the commands "gee" for turning right and "haw" for turning left. There are no ropes or reins attached as may be used when driving horses. The dog team is dependent on the front end of the team to respond to the verbal commands by the musher.

How do mushers teach the gee /haw commands to dogs ? Leader buddies are common ways mushers teach new leaders. Young dogs will learn from experienced running partners. Sometimes the young dog has already been running in a swing position (one back from leaders) which gives them more experience to become familiar with the gee / haw commands. A gentle nudge or pull by the experienced leader in the correct direction as the musher gives the verbal command is encouraging to the leader in training as is the musher praising the dogs for making the correct response to the verbal command. Soon the younger dog will be making the turns without help. Starting on an easy trail with choices, using the commands, and moving to more difficult trails is helpful.

Sled dogs are energetic and excited to go. If the dog in training has the attitude to lead, the gee/ haw commands will come more easily. The experienced leader buddy is a terrific model for behavior, for reactions to the gee/ haw commands and to lead with confidence. After the musher gives a command and the leaders go the correct way, she will praise them. If the dog in training turns the wrong way and his partner doesn't direct them, a musher will use the brake and wait for the dogs to make the correct choice. As soon as the dog makes the correct choice, mushers release the brake so the leaders can guide the team correctly. Sometimes it takes the musher to lead the team in the correct direction in the early learning process.

It is important to be positive with praise for the and repeat intersection choices so the commands can be practiced and reinforced. The time it takes to train gee/ haw leaders will be worth the patience and time to have the trust with your team led with confidence and enthusiasm.

Mandatory Gear

by Jane Holmes

This month's mandatory gear is focused on the [**2023 Iditarod Winter Educators Conference**](#). It is truly an experience that will equip you like no other professional development training.

Rub elbows with Iditarod mushers, staff, dogs, legends, fans, and other educators.

Experience Iditarod **pre-race veterinary checks** first hand and visit **Martin Buser's Happy Trails Kennel**.

Participate in the **Musher Meet and Greet** and drawing banquet on March 2.

Gain access to the start chute at the **Ceremonial Start** in downtown Anchorage.

All of this and a sled full of Iditarod based lessons to engage and inspire you.

Click on the images to the right for more information.



Registration Information



Speakers

A graphic for the 'Husky Talk' podcast. It features a central image of a husky's head with the text 'HUSKY TALK' and 'A PODCAST BY THE STUDENTS OF CAMANCHE MIDDLE SCHOOL'. Below this, it says 'HUSKY TALK SEASON 6' and 'New Episodes Available'. At the bottom, it lists the speakers: 'CHAS ST. GEORGE (SEASON 6 EPISODE 1)', 'WADE MARRS (EPISODE 2)', and 'DEE DEE JONROWE (EPISODE 3)'. There are three circular inset photos of the speakers: a woman with blonde hair, a man with a beard and glasses, and a man with a beard and glasses.

Sneak Peek

December is here! Turn on the fireplace, make peppermint hot cocoa, curl up with a good book or watch a predictable, yet heartwarming, holiday movie. It is a season filled with joy, laughter, love, and home. It also means we are less than 3 months from the start of the Iditarod and it is time to prepare for the race.



by Juli Westrich

2023 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™



Rohn and Martin Share a Hug at the Arch in Nome.

Photo Credit: Iditarod

SEL Snacks: This month's SEL "snack" will wrap up the focus on Social Awareness with real-life Iditarod examples of mushers demonstrating empathy and compassion, showing concern for others, and recognizing each other's strengths and abilities. I'll share an Iditarod example for each of these principles that can foster classroom conversation around social awareness.

Click on the image to enlarge it.

Representation matters. Students benefit from seeing themselves in the books they read and the media they watch. Representation is a significant part of both Social Emotional Learning and Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education. The oft-touted phrase "mirrors, windows, and sliding-glass doors" was coined by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop in 1990 and has long been a part of children's literature education, and library philosophy. How can students see themselves in the Iditarod? Can they imagine stepping into the world of dogsled racing? And how can literature help them achieve this? The **lesson plan** this month will provide a framework to teach about diversity with the Iditarod.



The 2018 Junior Iditarod Mushers are already committed to this sport!
Photo Credit: Iditarod

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education means that classrooms are inclusive so that every student can successfully access content and curriculum successfully. We know that this is aspirational and not always the case. Our students are surrounded by barriers preventing them from fully achieving their academic potential. Don't lose heart! It is true that students will face obstacles, but that happens constantly in the Iditarod, and yet mushers persevere. I'll take a look at some of the barriers to entry with Iditarod - How does one get into this sport anyway?- and explore how we can smooth the trail for our learners in the classroom.

Zuma's Scavenger Hunt – "I Come From a Mushing Family"



**The
Mushing
Mackey
Family**



Hello Friends,

It's Zuma here! Every year I read the biographies of all the Iditarod mushers and also the Jr. Iditarod mushers. Many of the bios contain the line, "I come from a mushing family."

Exploring mushing families as well as the Iditarod tradition that goes way back in some families - now there's a scavenger hunt!

Here's one from the Jr. Iditarod. Kristal Hanson ran the Jr. Iditarod in 2020 and 2021. She's not the first family member to do so. Her father ran the race and two of her aunts have run the Jr Iditarod. Combined, they've run the Jr. Iditarod thirteen times. Her father is the 1991 Jr. Iditarod Champion. Her grandfather and aunt have run the Iditarod three times. Now that's a mushing family and there are so many more.

What families have a long storied history in Iditarod? Count the number of races the Mackey family has participated in. Do the same for the Redingtons, and the Seavey family. Check out the long line of Smyths and also include Ramey's wife Becca Moore and Ramey's mother Lolly Medley. The Burmeisters have established a father/son family tradition as well. The Norris family has three generations of mushers - grandfather Earl, grand-daughter Lisbet and Lisbet's mother Kari Skogan. Trine Lyrek, rookie of the year in 2022, follows in the Iditarod sled tracks of her parents, Don and Hanna.

Jump over to the Jr. Iditarod and look for mushers from the Mackey, Seavey, Smyth and Burmeister clans. Many youngsters began their racing career in the Jr. Iditarod then graduated to the Iditarod.

Since the beginning of the race in 1973, there have been many men and women who have followed grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and siblings down the trail. The names mentioned above are only a small representation of Iditarod's "mushing families." Enjoy your time exploring mushing families.



**The
Mushing
Seavey
Family**



Sled Dog of the Month

by Kelly Villar



Wingman

photo credit: Ryne Olson

With just under 100 days to the 2023 Iditarod, this month, we visit with 3-time Iditarod finisher Ryne Olson. After mushing in Montana and Michigan, Ryne came to Alaska to work with Aliy Zirkle and Allen Moore. In 2012 Ryne ran her first Iditarod, mushing with SP Kennels red and black teams. Since then, Ryne has started her own kennel and has run 3 more Iditarods, finishing in 18th place in 2021. When asked about a dog that has touched her heart, here is what she had to say about Wingman!

Wingman is six years old. He's raced in five 1000-mile races. He LOVES all food and fancies himself quite the ladies' man. He runs anywhere in the team (lead, swing, team, or wheel) but wheel or team are his favorites. Wingman has the best attitude towards life. If you want to go for a car ride- count me in! Swim across the river- me too! Cuddle on the couch- make space for me! Run 1000 miles- I'm your guy! Wingman is down for anything. That sort of attitude is contagious, and it's hard to have a bad day when Wingman is around. If conditions get tough, I know I can count on Wingman to harness-bang and get the team fired up. He's one special dude.

Wingman sounds like an amazing dog with an amazing attitude. Take chances, do what you love, and try new things, a perfect recipe for adventure!

To learn more about Ryne Olson and her team, visit <http://rynokennel.com/about>.

K9 Journalist Corner

by Libby Littles



Libby

What's a TEAM?

Leaping Libby here: Alaskan husky puppy, living her best life in the Northwoods of Wisconsin, and dreaming of becoming a sled dog. I've gotten to know most of the folks here at the kennel. They're all pretty wonderful, each in their own unique way.

Each of the sled dogs has their own personality, their own likes and dislikes, their own way of being around each other. I learned pretty quickly not to get in the way of Jenga, the bossy sled dog who has no patience for puppies. But I also learned that Forrest is kind. Hari and Clem are calm. Flame loves me like a generous aunty.

Wicksy is a bunch of goofy fun. Pepe is a genius and will steal your bones. Grinch is confusing and pees on everything. Spike is a happy floof with a huge head. Colbert loves food almost as much as he loves running (or is that running almost as much as food?). Brilliant Pepe is The Queen and leader of the kennel. Our kennel is full of personalities. I'm starting to see how this group all fits together, and I'm dreaming about how I'll fit into this thing they call a TEAM.

Sometimes I learned about them the hard way. Take Dora, for example. Dora is known for speed and fun and chaos. Chaos is when you never quite know what is happening because you are going in a million directions at once, and all of them very fast. Sounded like great fun to me.

Ever have a friend who was lots of fun a lot of the time, but then sometimes a lot of trouble?

One day, we were headed out to the bog for a splish splash, and I thought it would be great fun to follow Dora. On our way, she would speed off the trail after this sound or that smell, and I'd chase along, only to discover she'd bounded back, and I had to flail about trying to find everyone again. And once we got there, for some unknown reason, she pounced me and trampled me right into the bog. Now, where did THAT come from? I learned that I needed to be careful about Dora's kind of fun.

One day, I was thinking about Dora, when the humans started dressing sled dogs up in harness to run as a TEAM. I had no idea what a TEAM was until I saw our humans connect a bunch of sled dogs together and attach them to something they could pull. During fall training, it was scooters, bikes, and carts. This day, it was a sled.

As I watched the humans gather together the sled dogs, I made a mental note of who got to go. Of course Pepe was in front, holding the line out calmly while the others were trundled up and hooked in.

My biggest surprise came last. Dora, the sled dog of chaos, was brought up, bouncing on her back legs, and hooked in right in front of the sled! Dora? In the team? Right in front of the sled? Didn't the humans know about her? I was so confused!

Now, when a bunch of sled dogs are hooked up to pull something, they ALL get REALLY excited. And LOUD. They bounce and pull and jump and shout. There is so much energy, it seems like they are going to explode. Then, WHOOSH, they are off and away. I made a new mental note to ask Pepe about this whole TEAM thing when they returned. If they returned.

"Um, Pepe?" I asked quietly, after they had returned and had eaten snacks and rested awhile. "Pepe, I'm confused about TEAM. I know why you are part of the team. You are wise and brave and all the dogs and humans trust you to lead them. Today I watched all the other dogs get put in harness, and.... Dora? She's a lot of fun, but.... Dora?"

Continued on next page

Wise, wise Pepe just chuckled and said, "I'd rather have a team with some Doras in it than a team with only Pepes." Pepe explained that a team needs sled dogs with a lot of different strengths. "Not only is Dora fun and chaotic, but she is super strong, fast, and loves to pull. Her energy is just what we need, tucked carefully into the team. Controlled chaos is the best chaos."

Then Pepe explained how all their unique traits make them important to the team.

"Calm Clem makes a great partner for the boisterous teammate on the other side of the tug line. Happy Wickson keeps up everyone's mood. All the sled dogs have something special to help the team. It's when we have all these unique personalities and strengths together, all working toward a common goal, that we do best. Of course it helps to have Blair and Quince, the awesome humans who coach us."

In my head, I thought, "and awesome leaders like you, Pepe."

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Next Race	94	23	42	20
	Days	Hrs	Mins	Secs

2023

- January 14 - **Return Dog Blankets** due in Alaska
- January 31 - **Trail Mail Projects** due in Alaska
- February 15 - **Conference Registration** closes (if not closed prior due to being full)
- February 17 - **Banquet Centerpieces** due in Alaska
- February 28 - March 3, 2023 - Iditarod Education Department **Educators Conference**, Lakefront Hotel, Anchorage, Alaska
- March 2 - **Musher Meet and Greet and Banquet**, Anchorage, AK
- March 4 - **Ceremonial Start** of Iditarod 2023, Anchorage, AK
- March 5- **Restart** of Iditarod 2023, Willow, AK



Anna and Kristy Berington with 2020Teacher on the Trail™ Kelly Villar photo: Iditarod.com

The third annual Trail Mail art contest is complete and we want to announce the Top Ten Finalists and art design contest WINNER for the 2023 Trail Mail envelopes.

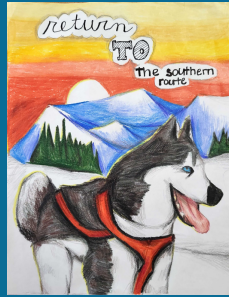
It was difficult for our official judges, Jon and Jona Van Zyle, to select out of over 50 entries the one that displayed the theme and artistic value best. Huge thanks to all teachers that took the time to involve your students in our Trail Mail Art Design contest. See you again next year!



Kennedy L.



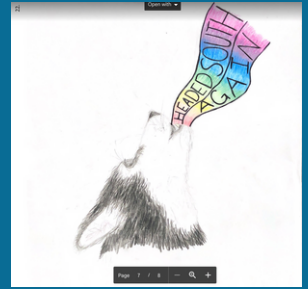
Risha G.



Jonah H.



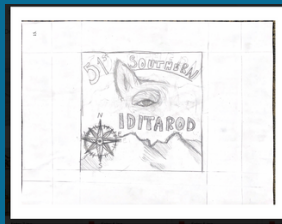
Hailey P.



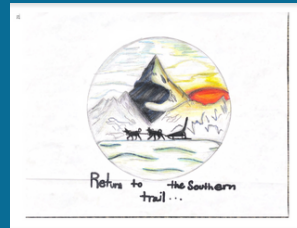
Evelyn W.



Alayna L.



Cailin S.



Ali C.



Karlyn T.



2023 Trail Mail Art Design Winner
Tom B.