

MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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Milestones

by Jane Holmes

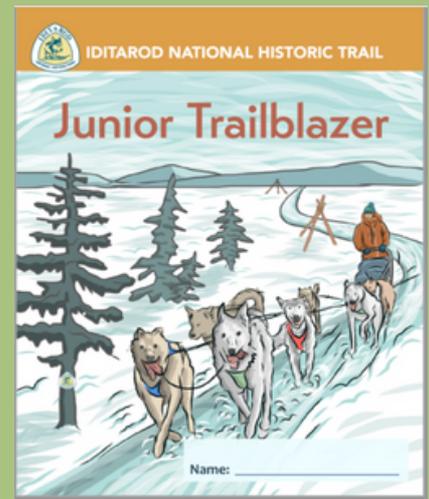
The 2023 Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race is like all other past races in that it was exciting, unpredictable, beautiful and awe-inspiring. But, it is unique in the ways of the milestones that mark its story. For the first time, a Redington was named champion, the top 3 finishers are Alaska natives, 3 rookies that were thwarted in their attempts to reach Nome last year arrived under the burlled arch earning veteran status, new names broke into the Top Ten, including a rookie...and other personal stories that mushers could tell, I'm sure. Use this year's race to engage your students for that last leg of the school year; weave current race information into your science, math, language arts, social studies -well, every area - to energize your classroom for the push to the finish line. Use this month's resources and don't forget to check the EDU website and social media for new postings.

Mandatory Gear

by Jane Holmes

The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race is run along the Iditarod National Historic Trail. The Bureau of Land Management and other entities that own the land which the trail runs through all work in conjunction with the Iditarod Trail Committee to run the race each year. It is Alaska's only winter National Trail and was the first trail in Alaska to be designated a National Historic Trail, thanks in great part to Joe Redington, Sr. who led the trail reclamation in the 70s. Read more here: [Iditarod National Historic Trail Brochure](#) In fact, one of Joe's reasons for developing the race was to preserve the trail; the other reason was to preserve the sled dog culture. Students can become Junior Trailblazers using this free resource from the Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance. Use this resource to enrich your Iditarod themed curriculum in social studies, history, and geography.

[Junior Trailblazers - Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance](#)



2023 Iditarod EDU Summer Seminar Newberry, MI, located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan June 25 - 27, 2023

Registration will be open soon for the 2023 Iditarod EDU Summer Seminar in upstate Michigan! We are thrilled to again be offering a Lower 48 professional development experience like no other! With kennel visits, Iditarod educator workshops on using the race to deliver your curriculum and a 25th Anniversary celebration of the Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™, these 3 days cannot be missed. Here is a summary. For more information visit our website: [2023 Iditarod EDU Summer Seminar](#) To be added to an email list for information, email Jane Holmes at: jane.holmes@iditarod.com

Sunday, June 25, 2023

Hear from the pioneer Teacher from the Trail, Andrea "Finney" Aufder Heyde, learn more of the free resources the Iditarod EDU has for you, hear from sled dog veterinarian Dr. Tom Gustafsen - he will share his expertise on racing dogs.

After lunch, travel to nearby Nature's Kennels, McMillan, MI, home of Ed, an eight-time Iditarod finisher and both Ed and his wife Tasha have won Marquette's UP 200 Sled Dog Race.

Monday, June 26, 2023

Our meeting place is the Erickson Center for the Arts in Curtis, MI.

Become engaged in sessions led by Iditarod EDU faculty, including our 2024 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™, Kate Newmyer. Then Tasha Stielstra of Nature's Kennel will lead an education session. Learn from the K9 Urine Collection Coordinator and 2011 Teacher from the Trail™ Martha Dobson and see an EDU exclusive vet check video. Dig deeper into the "Eye on the Trail" blog with journalist and 2006 Teacher from the Trail™ Terrie Hanke. Additionally, Sara Kimball will share her volunteering experience - "Looking Down Memory Lane" the last 10 years volunteering at the "Last Great Race".

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

This is a full day experience at Laura Neese's MI DOG Summer Sled Dog Center for 8 hours of learning, cuddling puppies, and meeting the individual dogs on Laura's team. Learn of topics such as: year round training, qualifying for the Iditarod, drop bags, her checkpoint routine, what it looks like to go to the Iditarod from the lower 48, etc. Jeri Neese, Laura's mother, will give a very hands-on presentation with examples of how the Iditarod made its way into their homeschool classroom and ways to incorporate the race into teaching different subjects. Katie Kunze is going to talk about how she incorporates real life mushing experiences into her classroom.

The seminar will end after the kennel programming on this day.



April Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

Reading

[More on Musher Ryan Redington](#)

Students know that Ryan Redington won the 2023 Iditarod! Here is a good article for them to read and summarize that gives more information about Ryan from an interview in 2019.

[Iditarod Inspired Poetry](#)

Following the Iditarod and learning about it much of the school year will give your students extensive background knowledge to explore figurative language and poetry.

STEM

[IditaBoxes: Tinkering Along the Trail](#)

All teachers have students who do better when they can touch and build things. Check out this lesson for using "tinker boxes" for your students' hands-on learning.

Math

[Build a Dog House: Math and Science](#)

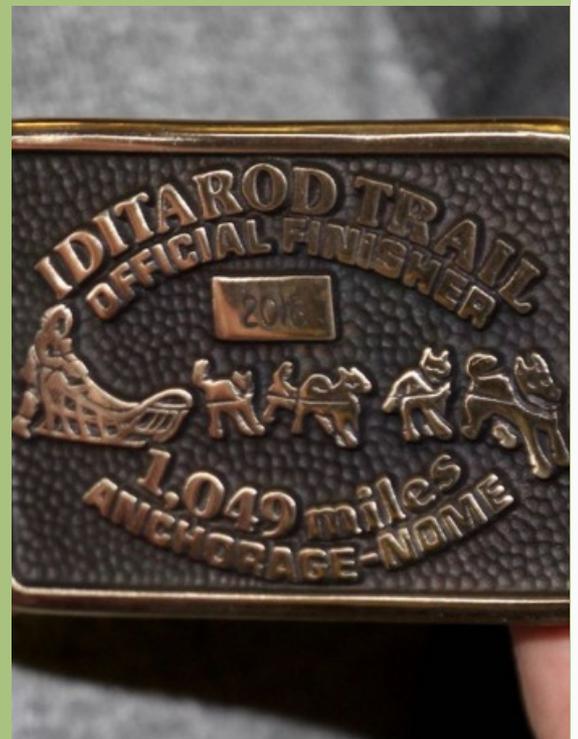
Doghouse math combines with science in this lesson for all levels of students!

Sanka W. Dog's Zoom Lens Photo

The coveted Finisher's Belt Buckle designed by Richard Burmeister. It is given to a musher when they finish their first race. Only 830 unique individuals have finished the Iditarod in 51 races.

"Somewhere in those first years, I began to make a lifetime commitment to the Iditarod. Why? There were just too many great human, animal, and historic values to hope someone else would pick up the slack and run with it."

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



Click on the image to enlarge it.

Photo: Terrie Hanke

Sled Dog of the Month

by Kelly Villar

Photos: Jeff Deeter

Jeff Deeter of Black Spruce Dog Sledding shares one of his special dogs.

Dogs touch our lives in so many ways by their love and devotion to their humans and our love for them.



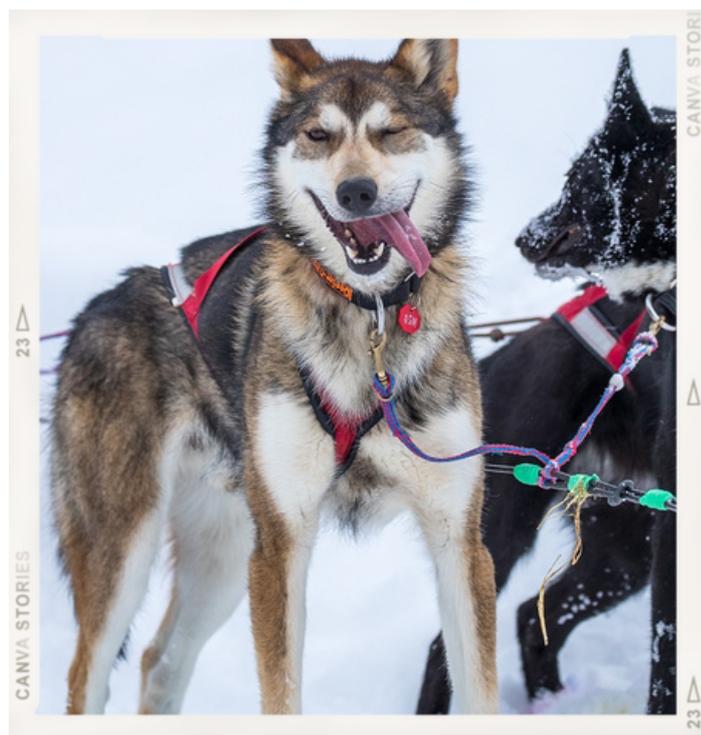
click on photos to enlarge

"Qarth is a dog unlike any other that I have had the pleasure of owning and running. At home, he is timid of every new person and gives off an alarm bark at every single vehicle or atv that arrives at our house. He is, however, incredibly attached to me, and is always overly excited for attention and pets (jumping up into my face and licking and nipping my cheeks). As it is time to run, his enthusiasm is unmatched. He is almost impossible to unclip from his house because he is so excited, and then runs lap after lap around the kennel as I walk down to his position in the team. Once his harness is on though, he is all business, and is one of my most focused dogs.

Qarth has finished two Iditarods, running in single lead for over 300 miles in both of those races. He is the one dog I have that excels when he has the opportunity to run alone, and typically works harder and is more driven as the trail gets slow and rough (or disappears altogether). In 2018, Qarth led my Iditarod team through a blizzard on the way to Don's Cabin. We had belly-deep drifts, 35-mile-per-hour winds, and no trail. Qarth was as happy as could be and had the incredible ability to feel the hard-packed trail under the fresh snow and take us safely and effortlessly through the storm. He was two years old in this race.

As Qarth has aged, he has become more confident in busy situations and has now learned how to pass small crowds of people and loose pet dogs (not easy for a naturally shy dog). Because he is so attached to my wife and me, Qarth will retire with us and stay at our home for the rest of his life. This is somewhat unique, as we have a lot of people in Alaska who are excited to adopt older sled dogs. Alaskan huskies often make really nice pets, and most mushers work hard to train their sled dogs to be inside and house-trained (in winter, we will often times have as many as 20 dogs in the house after a training run)."

Jeff Deeter did not run the 2023 Iditarod however his wife, Kattijo, finished her rookie run in 16th position!



Sneak Peek

The 2023 Iditarod is over and I can guarantee that I will never look at the race the same way again. My time in Alaska, out on the trail, meeting the mushers, having a front row seat to all the excitement and intensity of the race, will never be surpassed or forgotten. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to be the 2023 Teacher on the Trail™. And while there are still a few months left of my tenure, a few more SEL ideas and lesson plan posts to be shared, I am aware that I am very much on the back-nine of this year-long course. This year's finalists were at the Iditarod EDU conference sharing their talents and insights, and the 2024 Teacher on the Trail™ will be announced soon. I am excited to pass the torch to another educator passionate about the Iditarod. But not yet....this month the posts will touch on decision making, highlighting history and math to discuss equality and equity! Click on the images to enlarge.



by Juli Westrich

2023 Iditarod

Teacher on the Trail™



Early in the month I'll address the SEL concept of **Responsible Decision Making**. During the race mushers are constantly evaluating their team, themselves, and the environment to make the best possible choices. They want to choose wisely, safely, and occasionally take that risk that will result in victory! How can Iditarod help students make connections to their own lives and the decisions they make everyday around schoolwork, social situations, and extracurricular activities?

Every musher must decide when to leave a checkpoint. Here Rick Swenson takes off from Unalakleet.
Photo Credit: Iditarod

Ready to tackle **history, current events, and economics**? The lesson plan this month is going to look at the historic nature of the Iditarod Trail as a Gold Rush Mail Trail and how this boom brought many people up to Alaska hoping to get rich! We will take a look at some historic documents that help tell the real story of the cost and effort involved in the undertaking - and then compare/contrast to current modern day ways to "get rich quick".

At Iditarod, a southern route checkpoint, you'll find one of the few buildings that remain from the gold rush days.
Photo Credit: Iditarod



What is cold? It's all relative, depending on who you are and what you are used to. In early October a dip below 60 degrees means a sweatshirt, but in April it signifies time to grab a pair of shorts. So how cold was it really on the Iditarod Trail, what did I learn about staying warm, and why is -40 below a "magic" number? We can do some **math** along with a discussion of equality vs. equity in this month's CR-SE themed post.

At Iditarod, a southern route checkpoint, you'll find one of the few buildings that remain from the gold rush days.
Photo Credit: Iditarod

If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

original illustration by Jon Van Zyle

Iditarod sled dog teams are required to start with 12 to 14 dogs, of which 5 of them must be on the gangline at the finish line in Nome. How are the numbers of dogs determined?



Like any team sport there are rules and guidelines for sled dog races, too. The Iditarod has a rules committee that includes veteran Iditarod mushers, veterinarians, and others - all looking out for the best interest of the dogs. The dog minimum was decided on by these professionals.

Iditarod sled dogs are very strong and powerful athletes. These dogs have run hundreds of miles training to build strength and endurance. They have trained to run, rest, and eat practicing these routines often to insure it is a habit the dogs know well.

Like team tryouts, the dogs chosen for the team are prepared. They need a physical for good health, and the dogs chosen by the musher are based on their ability to run, rest, and eat well.

Along the race trail the dogs are continually watched and evaluated by their musher and the veterinarians for the dogs' health, appetite, and attitude. They receive the best care including extra rest, massages and a variety of foods. Great care for the dogs is most important. In the best interest of a dog that doesn't want to continue in the race, a musher may leave it with a veterinary team at a checkpoint along the race trail.

Jason Mackey successfully finished the 51st Iditarod with a team of 5 healthy, happy dogs. He had given these dogs outstanding care and plenty of rest. His fellow mushers voted him the Most Inspirational Musher for the 2023 race.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Next Race	344	23	08	11
	Days	Hrs	Mins	Secs

April 16 - Raffle Drawing

June 24 - Volunteer Picnic/Musher Sign-ups

June 25 -27 - 2023 Summer Educators Workshop, UP Michigan

K9 Journalist Corner

by Sled Dog Ed

A 1,000 Mile Journey



Dear Teachers,

Navigating my kennels is not difficult since I have been around here for quite a while. Being in new places, though, it takes a while to learn where to go and establish a feel for the layout of the land. Students often feel that same way in school, especially at the beginning of the year, and any new places they may encounter. The children at the kennel and I were talking about the Rookie mushers who have been on their first runs of the Iditarod. We were discussing the concerns they may have had about finding the trail, knowing where to turn, how far it would actually take to get to a checkpoint or resting area, where the good resting spots would be, and many more questions and thoughts that would possibly have filled their minds.

I shared with them that before the race, the mushers usually research, investigate, talk with veterans, and really plan out their run. I even shared the virtual checkpoint journey articles written by fellow K-9 Journalist, Sanka W. Dog. Those articles are filled with information and interesting facts about each checkpoint. Using as much knowledge as mushers can obtain, the mushers map things out as best as possible ahead of the race trip.

Planning and using maps are useful skills for everyone. Students shared with me that in Social Studies class they were examining maps of historical events in the history of the United States. One event they were working on was determining distances between the places along Lewis and Clark's expedition. Even back then, historical figures planned their trips with as much knowledge as they had available. However, sometimes things came up unexpectedly and plans had to change. This is very similar to the mushers. They plan their trip and supplies as best as possible and then adjust while out on the trail.

Teachers, pose the following question to your students: If you could take a 1,000 mile journey that begins in your hometown, where would you want to go?

From there, have the students plan their 1,000 mile journey beginning in your hometown and ending at their chosen destination. They should do this on a map which could even be an interactive map, of which many are available online. Students can add pictures of the areas to which they will travel through and to, as well as any factual information about those areas.

I wonder where your students will venture on their 1,000 mile journey. Maybe they will take me along....wishful thinking!

Happy planning and safe travels to everyone!

~Sled Dog Ed

Get the lesson materials here:

[1,000 Mile Journey Lesson](#)

[Travel Plan Sample](#)

Zuma's Scavenger Hunt - Awards

Hello Friends,

It's Zuma here! Receiving an award is a great honor! There are awards that are given to sled dogs. Did you know that? Rather than make you hunt for information about the awards that go to sled dogs, I'll share some stories with you.

The Blue Harness is given to an outstanding lead dog in the Jr. Iditarod. Sometimes it goes to a leader on the winning team. Sometimes the mushers honor another dog. Such was the case in the 2023 Jr. Iditarod. Lacy Kuehl actually had to scratch from the Jr. Iditarod but her leader was honored with the Blue Harness. When Lacy became ill on the trail, she told her leader Shooby we need to get to a checkpoint. Shooby did the job, bringing the team to Yentna Station. In the time of need, one might say Shooby was large and in charge! Shooby did what lead dogs do - lead.



photo credit: Erin Montgomery



The Golden Harness Award is given to an outstanding lead dog of the Iditarod. Most often, like the Jr. Iditarod, it goes to a leader like 2019 Champion Peter Kaiser's Morrow. But that hasn't always been the case.

photo credit: Julien Schroder



Here's an incredible story about the Golden Harness Award of 1982 when the Golden Harness was awarded to a leader from 6th place Ernie Baumgartner's team as told by Ernie himself.

"It was a particularly severe storm out on the coast, many of the lead dogs of front-runner teams just wouldn't venture into the wind and low visibility where there was no discernable trail. We were not up front but my lead dog, Brandy, seemed to know where that trail was, although it was not visible to others. Brandy not only led our team across that stretch but several other teams as well. Following that 1982 race, the mushers voted to honor Brandy with the Golden Harness, a treasured award for the most outstanding lead dog."

Brandy's Golden Harness hung on Ernie's 3rd place trophy from 1980 which sat in the coffee shop of Hotel McGrath located in McGrath, Alaska where Ernie and his family lived.

photo credit: Terrie Hanke

Find the explanation and winners of the special awards for 2023 listed in the Race Center Tab. Decide which awards are given because of an act of kindness or compassion or because of personal traits or characteristics. Decide which awards are given based on effort. Decide which awards are given because of performance. Discuss why it's important to have awards that are given on the basis of personal actions or effort as well as awards that are performance based. Create a list of possible year end awards for your classroom and categorize them into performance, effort or character awards. Have fun!

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unless otherwise credited

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