

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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## And We're Off . . .

by Linda Fenton

Welcome to the 2023-24 Iditarod Education Newsletter. It looks to be another exciting year with 10 rookie mushers and 20 veterans of the race signed up so far. Read about this year's field [here](#). With this monthly newsletter, we hope to inform you of race news, upcoming events, and, most importantly, lessons you can use in your classroom.

Here's to a great 2023-24 school year. Mush on!



## September Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

### Character:

This article is a good morning meeting discussion and reflection on "[Honest Dogs](#)" and how it applies to our classrooms. The principles cause teachers to think of our practices when our students are not performing as expected.

### Writing/Get to Know You Activity:

We all know that building relationships and getting to know our students is essential. Incorporating this writing piece for our students to share what "[makes them tick](#)" is a good beginning activity.

### Math:

Many students are unaware that there is a Jr. Iditarod for 14-17 year olds. Since it is the beginning of the year for classes, [this lesson](#) could help illustrate how a musher can get started as well as provide some adding and subtracting practice for younger grades, and statistical landmarks practice (mean, mode, median, range) for older students!

### Getting Started with the Iditarod

For any of you excited to engage your students with Iditarod themed lessons, here is a [good read](#) on how to get started!

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"The Iditarod Trail Race went from an event that almost never got off the ground to the world-class event it has become today."

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

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# What's In Kate's Sled Bag?

By Terrie Hanke

Have you met Kate Newmyer, the 2024 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail™? Kate teaches 5th grade language arts and social studies near Houston, Texas. Kate, who lives only a short distance from Johnson Space Center, plays oboe, holds two master's degrees in education, serves on several committees for her school district and is an adult leader and merit badge counselor for the Boy Scouts of America. Read about Kate [here](#).



**Kate Newmyer**  
**2024 Iditarod**  
**Teacher on the Trail™**

During the Iditarod Summer Conference, Kate revealed her themes for the coming year. She will share three posts each month, published on or very close to the 10th, 20th and 30th of the month.

**Lessons** – Kate will create and share lessons using history, science writing, art and math that will include adaptations for multiple grade levels. [Cranberry Bog](#), a lesson for media literacy is ready for you to use.

**Classroom Culture** activities – these posts will encourage teachers to have fun with the Iditarod and incorporate it into the classroom to build shared culture and citizenship. [Getting to Know Your Students with Musher Bibs](#) is a superb idea for those first days of school.

**Houston, We Have a Connection** – Kate says, “The more I ponder, the more I see many fun parallels between space flight and racing Iditarod. These posts will provide insight into our local space culture and how the Iditarod and space travel share many common traits. More than [Joe Redington’s favorite drink, TANG](#). In September Kate will share a lesson, “What Are They Pulling.” Standards at all grade levels guide students to create meaningful and memorable personal narratives to develop writing skills. Memories and significant life events constitute what students are “pulling.” This Classroom Culture post will invite students to set goals and determine how they are going to “pull” toward those goals. [Houston, We Have a Connection](#) for September will describe the similarities in the development of vehicles for training, mushing and space travel.

There’s also a trio of Lesson, Culture and Connection posts from August that are waiting for you in the EDU section of Iditarod’s webpage.

Kate promises, “I will do my part to share about the Iditarod and its history, people, amazing dogs and the Alaska way of life. Thanks for joining me on this incredible journey.”



**Monica Zappa has unpacked her sled bag.  
Can you spot some Mandatory Items?**

**Photo by Terrie Hanke**

# K9 Journalist Corner

by ZUMA



**Hello Friends,**

As we head into the dog days of summer, things are ramping up around here at Iditarod Headquarters. The race is less than 200 days away and lots needs to be done so the humans are working hard to make sure everything is ready by the Ceremonial Start on March 2, 2024.

This past June, the EDU department had a great Educator's Conference in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with teachers coming from all over the Lower 48. A few past Teachers on the Trail donated their time to run the conference where lessons and information were shared. The conference culminated with a trip to visit my fellow canines at MI Dog Sled Center run by Laura Neese. Information will be available soon regarding the Iditarod Winter Educators Conference in Anchorage. Try to join us - it's a howling good time.

I hope you all have a great school year. Remember, you can learn a lot from a bunch of dogs. Thanks for bringing the Iditarod into your classroom.

**Tail wags,  
Zuma**



**Sled dogs and mushers aren't the only ones working in the summer - these teachers worked on Iditarod lessons in Curtis, Michigan.**

# If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

## *What do sled dogs do in the summer?*

As students and teachers return to their classrooms, the question asked each year is "What did you do this summer?"

Sled dogs, like students, are able to have a change of daily routines in the summer months when temperatures and humidity exceed about 50 degrees. Summer is a time to relax from the heat and humidity. Dogs are still physically and socially active, but in different ways.

Mushers look for options to engage their dogs in daily physical and social interactions. It might be one on one with themselves or open to guests and family. Large fenced free run areas are used for play to have groups of dogs running and playing like kids do with their friends. After running, a swim in a nearby lake or pond may be an option.

Some mushers open their kennels to visitors or have opportunities that offer summer camps focusing on time with the dogs. It can be a time for kids to spend with dogs in play and to learn to care for the dogs. Often dogs and humans take appropriate 1-2 mile hikes together.

Alaska and colder regions also offer other summer opportunities. They take advantage of the glaciers with cooler temperatures and snow. Dogs are harnessed in teams and they give short rides using sleds or carts.

Mushers want to involve their dogs in daily activities all summer that are appropriate to the dogs' levels. When it is back to school for classrooms, the dogs are rested and excited to start back to their running routines; in harness and on trails.

## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

**September 1, 2023 - 2024 Trail Mail Art Contest Begins**

**November 2, 2023 - 2024 Trail Mail Art Contest Designs Due**

**December 1, 2023 - 2024 Trail Mail Sales Begin**

**December 1, 2023 - 2025 Iditarod Teacher on the Trail Applications Due**

**March 1, 2024 - Iditarod Education Department Educator's Conference, Anchorage, Alaska**

# Mandatory Gear

by Jane Holmes

## ***Prepare yourself for the upcoming 2023-24 school year!***

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 2024.

If you are curious about how to become the [Iditarod Teacher on the Trail for 2025](#), 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!



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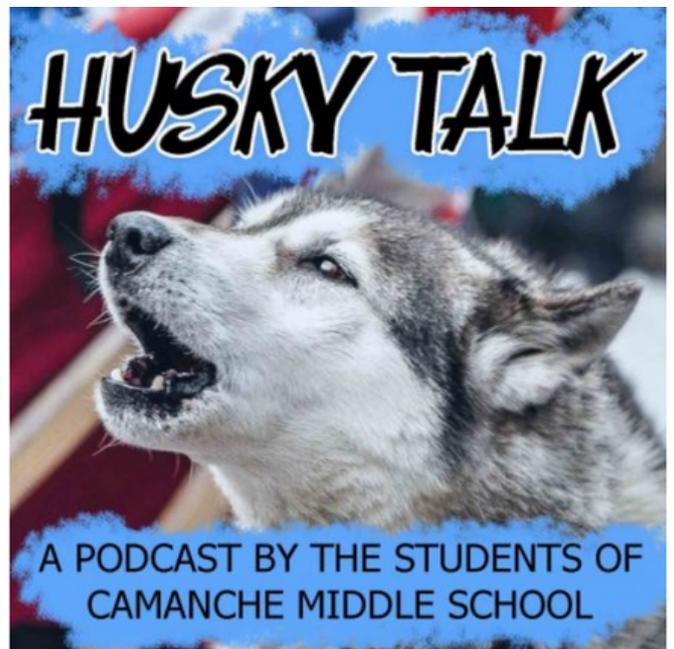
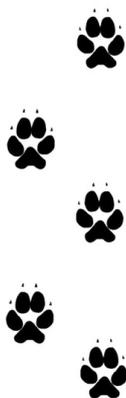
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**New episodes coming soon!**

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