

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

## NEWS & FEATURES

November Teaching Ideas  
Page 2

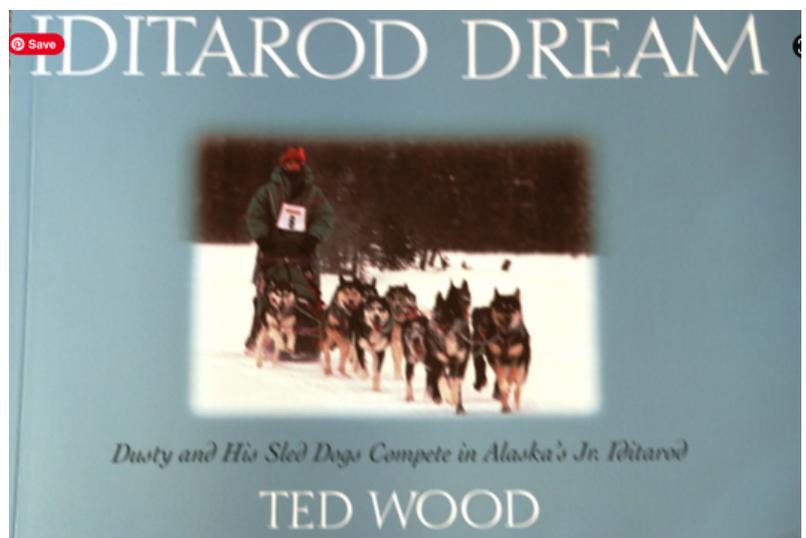
What's In Kate's Sledbag?  
Teacher on the Trail™  
Page 3

K9 Journalist  
Sled Dog Ed  
Page 4

If You Mush Know . . .  
Page 5

Winter Educator's  
Conference  
Page 6

Mark Your Calendars  
Page 7



## Book of the Month

### Iditarod Dream

This month's book recommendation comes from our 2024 Teacher on the Trail, Kate Newmyer. She wrote in her "[Musher Campout](#)" post: *One of the books on [Iditarod Recommended Reading List](#) is *Iditarod Dream* by Ted Wood. It tells the story of Dusty Whittimore, a teen who won the Jr. Iditarod twice. The photos accompanying the text are splendid and informative. I highly recommend adding this book to your classroom if you have not already.*

This book pairs well with the math lessons in her post.



## November Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

### Science

Is your school struggling to meet the science standards? 2017 Teacher on the Trail, Annie Kelly McGuire, wrote about the Alaska Sealife Center that offers distance learning programs! Check out her post with the link to possible classroom virtual programs. "Living in the Ring of Fire" is calling my class's name!

[Alaska Sealife Center](#)

### Creative Writing

Incorporating the Iditarod into lessons builds student engagement! In your poetry or creative writing units, try this triangle poem idea from 2013 Teacher on the Trail, Linda Fenton. It is quick, but engaging for students to demonstrate their understanding of creative, descriptive writing.

[Triangle Poems](#)

### Digital Literacy

Researching mushers can be done in a variety of ways. Read about a variety of projects from 21-22 Teacher on the Trail, Jim Deprez. having to do with choosing and researching mushers! Some come with digital options to meet technology standards.

[Musher Research With A Digital Twist](#)

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"The diversity of cultural and ethnic backgrounds of early Iditarod mushers was as broad as Alaska itself. Yup'ik and Inupiat from western Alaska and the Chukchi coast, and Athabascan Natives from the interior villages brought generations of dog lore and survival skills with them."

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Joe May

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



Joe May, 1980 Champion at Awards Banquet

# What's In Kate's Sled Bag?

## "The International Dog Bus"

Sled dogs love to travel. They get to go to new places, explore, and of course, experience new smells. The lesson for this month will share how mushers use geography and topography to learn the trail, determine race timing, and plan for their needs along the way. Explorers, travelers, and migrating populations (both people and animals) study the land to plan their journeys. Journeys are a constant part of history, so whether you are teaching about rural vs urban environments or covering Human Geography topics in a high school class, you can study various journeys through the lens of the Iditarod.

November's "Houston, We Have a Connection" post will share how the journey of the Iditarod, just as the journey into space--also like teaching--can be predictable at times, and yet wildly unpredictable at other times, and we learn valuable lessons for next time.

"Classroom Culture" will talk about how educators and students are on a shared journey together. The African proverb states, "If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together." The post will share ways that you can emphasize the concept of a shared journey to build character traits like citizenship and generosity. One thing you can do to make this concept visible for students is to build bulletin boards about teamwork. I confess I wasn't very good at bulletin boards when I started teaching 5th grade. But if you involve the students...it's so much better. The first image is our 5th grade board that shows each class working as a team. They pull sleds that represent our school, our families and community, the 7 Habits of Leader in Me™, and our Core Values of Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. The values are shown with the acronym TRRFCC—which says "terrific!" Each student colored a sled dog and shared the core value or habit that best fits them. My "Happy HOWL-oween!" door also couldn't have happened without student contributions. Seeing the "ghost dog" team working together reminds us we are all on a shared journey.



by Kate Newmyer  
2024 Iditarod  
Teacher on the Trail™

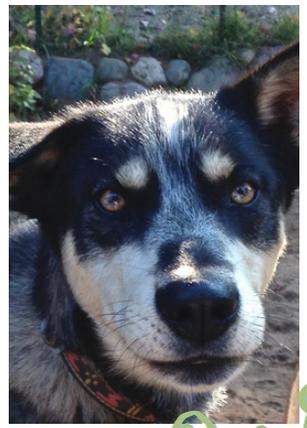


Photos by Kate Newmyer



## K9 Journalist Corner

by Sled Dog Ed



*Sled Dog Ed*

Dear Teachers,

A teacher from our local school stopped by to visit with me about some interesting Iditarod ideas she had for her classroom. The students had been discussing how through the Iditarod years sleds have been modified, equipment has been enhanced, training of dogs has improved, and the terrain of the Iditarod Trail has changed. She was wondering how all of that affected, if any, the winning times throughout the years. Great concept to think about! As she and I talked further, we came up with some questions for your students to investigate regarding the differences in winning times and Red Lantern times throughout the decades. Remember, the Red Lantern Award is given to the last musher who crosses the finish line in Nome.

Here are the questions the teacher plans to pose to her class upon returning to her school:

1. **What is the difference between the first place time in 1973 and that of 2023?** (11 days, 3 hours, 36 minutes, 13 seconds)
2. **What is the difference between the Red Lantern time in 1973 and that of 2023?** (20 days, 3 hours, 5 minutes, 54 seconds)
3. **What could be the reasons for shorter finishing and Red Lantern times throughout the years?** (faster breeds, better trails, better sled manufacturing, changes in dog training programs, musher knowledge, technology, etc.)
4. **Using the Red Lantern finish time for 2023, is that time faster than any winning teams in previous years? (Yes) How often has that happened?** (1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1991)

Get help finding answers:

[Race Center](#)

[Special Awards Archive](#)

# If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

## What qualities make a good lead dog?

A lead dog needs to feel that you TRUST them to empower them to lead. A musher watches their dogs as they mature for their attitudes and strengths. For a leader they look for a dog with confidence and desire to go. The dog is driven to run and lead out front. They are able to make quick decisions with obstacles like strong winds, snow, or rugged trails. A good lead dog shines when it can set a good pace to keep the team moving. Is the desire to be up front always quickly seen in a pup? Not always. Some dogs take time to build that trust and bond to a musher that suits their personality. It is similar to working in teacher- student relationships.

The musher and dogs have an incredible bond of TRUST with each other. A good example was Granite, a fantastic lead dog for Susan Butcher, a 4 time Iditarod champion. He was a shy pup, but Susan saw his potential. Together they worked until Granite became the leader of her team. He became very ill, but neither Susan or Granite gave up. Granite pulled through to race again. When leading the Iditarod that year Granite confidently led the team, They encountered an Arctic coastal blizzard. Susan and the team depended on Granite to get through it. Granite had the TRUST to empower him to lead the team confidently.



**Susan Butcher and Lead Dog, Granite, at the Finish Line in Nome.**

**Save the Date!**  
**Iditarod Education Department Winter Educators' Conference**  
**"Iditarod EDU 25th Teacher on the Trail Celebration"**  
**Lakefront Hotel**  
**Anchorage, Alaska**  
**February 27th thru March 1, 2024**

**And look at this! University of Alaska 1 credit (optional)**

As teachers, you know the impact of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog race - on teaching, on motivating, on providing authentic instruction, on inspiring, on creating excitement for learning. Here is what you have been waiting for! The annual Iditarod Educators' Conference will showcase the resources the Iditarod Education department has for educators everywhere.

**Your \$600 conference registration includes:**

- Volunteer room rates at the **Lakefront Hotel** which is Iditarod Headquarters during race time-be right in the middle of the hustle and bustle of race week!
- Tuesday and Thursday fully-packed days of sessions on using the Iditarod in your classroom presented by Iditarod Teachers on the Trail™ and guest speakers **Liz Millman - Return Dog Coordinator, Katti Jo Deeter and Kristin Knight Pace - Iditarod mushers.**
- Tuesday lunch - mini "**book fair**". Featured author Kristin Knight Pace and EDU staff recommendations.
- **Field Trip Day:** Ride a chartered bus to Iditarod headquarters to watch pre-race vet checks first hand, have **lunch**, and then visit **Travis Beals and Sarah Stokey's Turning Heads Kennel** in their new Knik location to meet the dogs!
- Your ticket to the Thursday evening **Musher Meet and Greet** before the banquet where you can talk with and get pictures and autographs of the 2024 mushers. Then enjoy the **Musher Drawing Banquet** and all of its presentations.
- Friday morning workshop session, collaboration and writing lessons you can use the day you get back to school! This lesson can double as part of your **University of Alaska** coursework.
- Friday morning (optional) **ICE training.** (There will be detailed information about this available.) Jon Van Zyle invited us to his 49th Annual Official Iditarod exhibition ( 1976 - 2024 ) at the GEORGIA BLUE GALLERY, 5 to 7 P.M
- We are planning an **informal get together** Monday evening, February 26, 2024, (not included in nor required for the conference.)

*Rich in resources, professional development unique to the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, hands-on experiential learning you can immediately take back to your classroom.*

**Follow this link:**

**[2024 Iditarod Winter Educators Conference Registration](#)**

**Email questions to Jane Holmes, Director of Education, at  
jane.holmes@iditarod.com.**

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

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

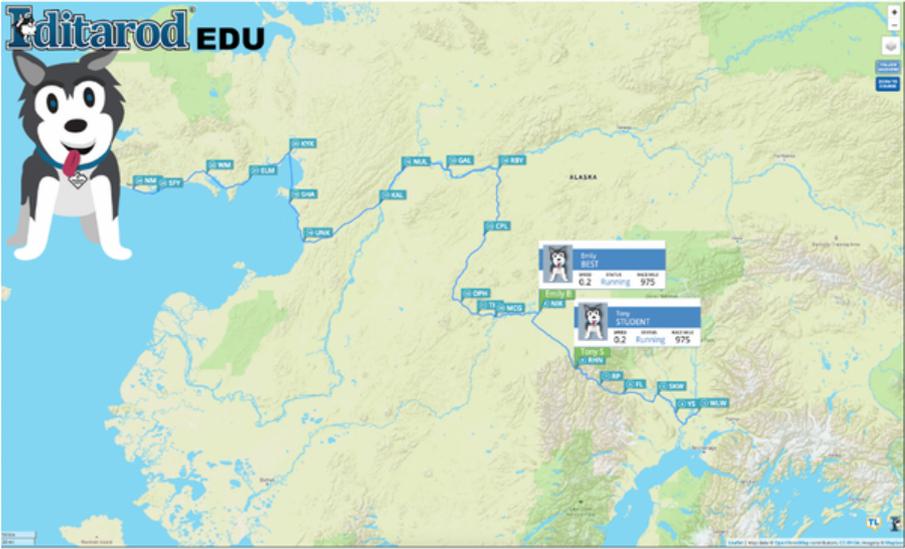
December 1, 2023: 2024 Trail Mail Sales Begin

February 27 - March 1, 2024: Iditarod Education Department Educators Conference, Anchorage, Alaska

February 29, 2024: Musher Banquet Gala

March 2, 2024: Ceremonial Start Iditarod

March 3, 2024: Official Start of 2024 Iditarod: The Last Great Race



Is your class or child signed up for **Iditarod**? Find out more about it by clicking on the map. **GET READING!**

## Iditarod<sup>®</sup> EDU

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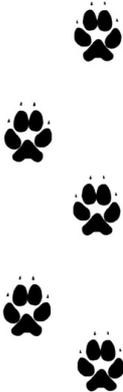
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All by Iditarod.com unless otherwise credited

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