

# MUSH ON!

Monthly Newsletter of the Iditarod Education Department

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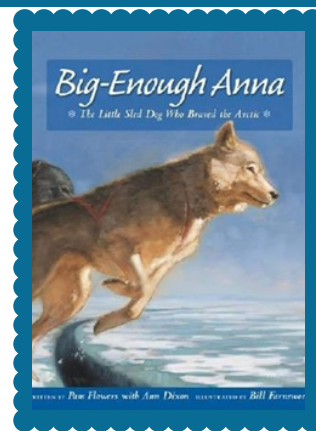
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## Book of the Month

**Big Enough Anna: The Little Sled Dog That Braved the Arctic by Pam Flowers**

The book recommendation this month comes from 2023 Teacher on the Trail Julianne Westrich.

This is a heartwarming story of a dog that everyone thought was just too little to make a difference, but when given the chance she proved she was just as capable as any other dog! Students, especially my youngest learners, often feel that they are just too small to make an impact and that their ideas, opinions, and contributions aren't valued because of their age or size. Anna proves that each member of a team has something to contribute. The lesson of the book is to never underestimate the determination and dedication that can help you succeed! Use this book to tie in facts such as the youngest/oldest musher and how they weren't thwarted by physical limitations or what others thought they were capable of!



## January Teaching Ideas

by Heidi Sloan

### Just Getting Started?

There is SO much that continues to be added to our curriculum standards that sometimes it is difficult to get going with Iditarod, as much as we want to incorporate the race. Here is a way to get going starting in January, leading up to the race in March.

#### [New to Teaching the Iditarod?](#)

### Math

**Multiplication:** Your students can read about a volunteer veterinarian and then go onto solve multiplication problems involving vet checks at various southern checkpoints!

#### [Multiplication](#)

**Measurement:** Can your students work on a practical project with measurement? Look through the need for dog blankets and decide if you can incorporate this activity into your measurement unit.

#### [Measurement](#)

### Language Arts

In the winter, motivation tends to wane in our classrooms. As you incorporate Iditarod lessons into required curricula, however, engagement balloons! Here is a part of speech Iditarod activity to grab your students' interest.

#### [Parts of Speech](#)

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Like most librarians, she was looking for innovative ways to get her students to read more - especially the boys. By 1983 she developed a plan for children to read as many as 1,049 pages while the Iditarod was in progress . . . a reading race to Nome.

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Diane Johnson  
writing about Peg  
Stout

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



**Pam Flowers signs the book *Big Enough Anna* at an Educator's Conference.**

# What's In Kate's Sled Bag?

by Kate Newmyer

One section of Braverman's book, *Dogs on the Trail - A Year in the Life*, looks at all the winter gear necessary for the Iditarod. It's a great opportunity to learn about what mushers, volunteers, officials, and Iditarod spectators wear through a Living Museum lesson. In the January lesson, students research an Iditarod role and then present that role or person to an audience by writing an article, giving a speech, creating a costume, or even creating a magazine cover. Students will know the various roles and responsibilities of everyone in the Iditarod.



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

The Classroom Culture post for this month talks about how mushers are easily recognizable by their signature colors, such as Ryan Redington's neon dog booties, or DeeDee Jonrowe's favorite pink. You can have a "color day" with your students to build community after a holiday break. Don't forget to start learning about the mushers in this year's race to get students excited for the Iditarod.

As I get ready for my trip, the pile of Alaska gear in my house is growing! Gear suitable for extreme Alaska temperatures is actually not that different from spacesuits. I'll talk about this in the "Houston, We Have a Connection" post.



**Jan Newton of the Takotna Checkpoint**  
**Read more about Jan and her famous**  
**pies on the next page.**

Photo by Terrie Hanke

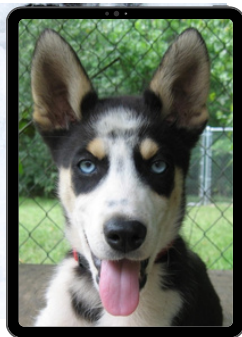


Photo by Terrie Hanke

### Save Room for the Pie & Math

The checkpoint of Takotna is known for its hospitality and great food, not the least of which is PIE. Before we get to the math applications that pie offers, let's learn a little about Takotna and how pie became its trademark.

In the early years of the Iditarod, Takotna wasn't a designated checkpoint, but a few neighbors decided to offer meals to the mushers passing by. Later, Takotna became an official checkpoint and is now highly favored as a 24-hour layover spot.

Every Takotna resident has a job during the Iditarod. Relatives and friends come from far and near to help during the race. The women cook, the men park dog teams and the kids rake straw. Jan Newton was the heartbeat of Takotna's hospitality and instrumental in Takotna's trademark - PIE. Learn more about Jan from this 2013 story when she was named Honorary Musher.

#### [Jan Newton](#)

Jan and the other women of the village would begin producing double crusted fruit pies several weeks before the race then freeze them to be baked at race time. The crème pies were made daily during the race. When the field was large, 75 - 80 pies would be a delicious memory after the last musher departed Takotna. Now with a smaller field, 50 pies will do the job. That's where the math comes in.

What math skills can pie help students practice? Doubling, tripling or quadrupling a recipe requires multiplying fractions, using common denominators and being able to convert measures such as teaspoons to tablespoons to cups. In doing a cost analysis, students find a recipe for their favorite pie and add up the cost of all the ingredients. Compare favorites and decide which pies would be most cost effective for Takotna. How does baking more than one pie affect the cost?

Years back musher, Sonny King, complimented Jan on all the delicious pie then asked why she didn't make his favorite, pecan. Jan replied, "We don't have pecans." Sonny took care of that by sending pecans to Jan from his home state of South Carolina when he was going to race. After that when he walked into the checkpoint, Jan handed him his very own pecan pie and he ate every bit of it.

Even though Takotna wasn't a checkpoint during the COVID years, they organized a TO-GO lunch service. When a team passed by, a village resident was standing by the trail with a sack lunch for the musher. In 2022 Jessie Holmes was so busy putting mayo and mustard on the sandwich and munching on chips that he actually took a wrong turn on the way through Takotna and found himself at the village landfill.

In 2023 Takotna reopened its doors and pie is still on the menu! Jan Newton Passed away in 2012. She left the checkpoint and the pie making duties in good and capable hands!

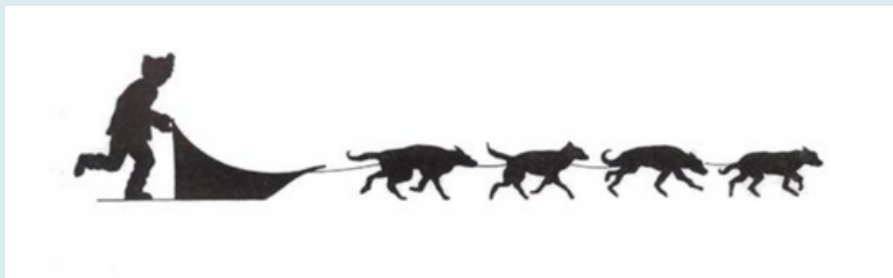
# If You "Mush" Know...

by Lynne Witte

## **Decisions, Decisions, Decisions!** **How does a musher decide** **where each dog should run in** **their team?**

As Gary Paulsen writes in his book *Dogteam*, "Some sing songs of excitement when the harnesses are put on because they want to run, breathe to run, eat to run, live to run..." A musher will spend many hours being with his/her dogs to bond and learn their personalities and skills. They may free run, interact with each other, and run in harness. All of this gives the musher time to see the skills and personalities of the dogs. They will see how dogs react with each other. This is very similar to many classrooms. A teacher or coach can watch the students or players to understand the skills of each individual. Every dog can get the opportunity in training to try different positions in the team.

If you are on a sports team or running track you have the opportunity to try different positions. A dog could be a leader who has alert attention and drive to set the pace. A dog point or swing ( second in team) helping and following the leaders and helping drive down the trails. The team dogs will be pulling following the leaders. Like students, some prefer being hard working but not leading. The wheel dog( closest to the sled) will likewise be able to take the movement of the sled while maintaining forward speed. It may take many runs to find the best fit. By switching positions each dog gets a chance to try a different job for the team just like your school teams. Every dog gets the opportunity to be their best on the team. Some dogs are great in many positions. Mushers will move and rotate dogs in their positions as the trails and dogs change through the season, Like your classroom, your teacher will change seating arrangements for a change in partners and opportunity to try new options. Goal is each dog will do their best in their position for the team. As Gary Paulsen concludes his story in *Dogteam*, " ... their laughing-panting breath freezes on their cheeks and makes them all smiles, dog-smiles, dog-laughs."



# Trail Mail Artists

By Jane Holmes

Just like the mushers of the Iditarod, Karlyn T. of WY showed perseverance and has been selected as the artist for the 2024 Trail Mail envelopes. Karlyn entered last year's Trail Mail design contest as well and was a top finalist. Meeting and exceeding the criteria of content and artistic aptitude, this 13 year old's design was selected by Jon and Jona Van Zyle from almost 30 entries to be printed on hundreds of envelopes that will be signed and carried down the trail by the 2024 Iditarod mushers. This year's theme was : "25 Years of Teacher on the Trail". The envelopes, a fundraiser for the Iditarod Education Department, carry a class project from the teachers that purchased a spot on a sled. In Nome, the envelopes will be collected and sent back to the classrooms via U.S. mail, having traveled the Iditarod Trail by dog team. Join us in congratulating Karlyn and the other 4 finalists!

## Trail Mail Sales



Finalist - Marisa - Age 10



Winner - Karlyn - Age 13



Finalist - Allish - Age 13



Finalist  
Rowan - Age 8



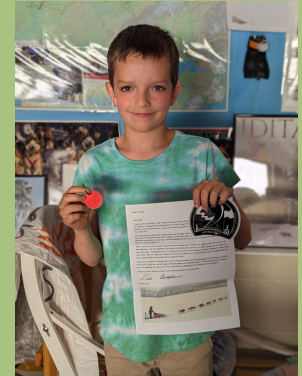
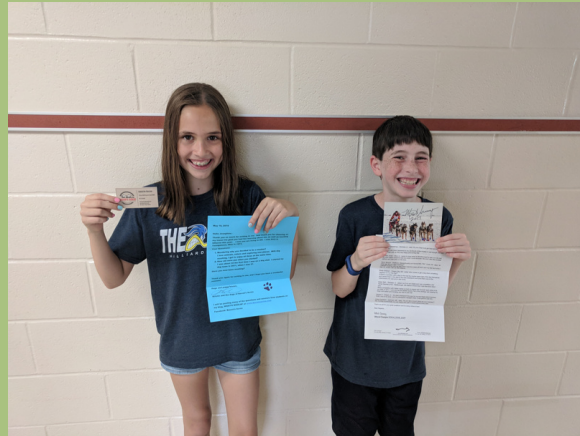
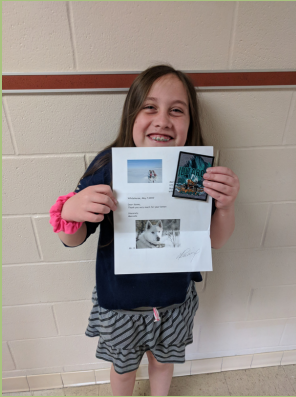
Finalist  
Arley - Age 6

# Letter Writing to Mushers

By Jim Deprez

With less than 60 days until the 2024 Iditarod, both mushers and teachers alike are preparing for the race. One way to make this experience more personal for the students is to have them write to a musher! This activity can be done individually, with partners or smaller groups, or even as a whole class. There is nothing more exciting than the reaction of a student when they receive a letter back from "their musher". If you are interested in this project, use the link below to register your class today!

[Iditarod Musher Letter](#)



Photos by Jim Deprez

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

**NOW: 2024 Trail Mail on sale**

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

[\(Conference and Registration Info Here\)](#)

**February 29, 2024: Musher Banquet Gala**

**March 2, 2024: Ceremonial Start Iditarod**

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

**Iditarod<sup>®</sup> EDU**

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