

Idita-Races



FROM THE BEACHES IN CALIFORNIA---
TO THE VILLAGES IN ALASKA
AND ALL AROUND THE WORLD,
STUDENTS ARE INVOLVED IN IDITAROD PROJECTS—
IDITA READS AND RACES
CONNECTING THE CONTENT AND CULTURAL
STANDARDS
ON THE TRAIL TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS
AND HEALTHY LIVING

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Idita Races

Research today indicates that daily physical activity while growing up is an important factor in developing a healthy heart as an adult. Recent research has suggested that youth should have at least 90 minutes of physical activity a day. Some schools are not allowing recess to be taken away as a form of punishment and are looking for new and empowering ways to get both students and teachers to be involved in physical exercise. Many school districts nation wide are stressing the importance of this physical activity during the school day which supports what we also know about the brain and how students learn. Active learning is key ingredient in academic success. Iditarod related activities can help lead students down the trail to both academic success and healthy living!



Get on the Iditarod Trail with Iditarod Races and IKIDARODS!

Many schools conduct Iditarod races with their students for a variety of academic reasons.

Project examples and information in this booklet is meant to provide you with ideas to meet the goals of your particular school or classroom as you create your own Idita-race or IKIDAROD.



Walking the halls of the “Iditarod Trail” in this school in North Carolina helps students on the trail to healthy living.

In McGrath, Alaska are involved in a Mini-Iditarod where 1st grade mushers drive a dogsled that is pulled by sled dogs.

<http://www.uaf.edu/iac/McGrath/photo.htm>

Healthy Active Child Project: Walking to Nome

**Mt. Pleasant Middle School, Mt. Pleasant, NC
October 2006**

Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, the State of North Carolina requires students in grades K-8 to have 150 minutes of physical activity per week. This activity must occur on a daily basis. Implementing a plan to meet this requirement was important to teachers like Martha Dobson.

The Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race became a perfect connection for a project such as this. Martha Dobson worked with other staff to implement their school's project, Walking to Nome.

Mt. Pleasant Middle School operates on a block schedule of 80 minute daily classes and, to meet this activity requirement, provides 15 minutes per day before or after the lunch period for activity in addition to the students' regular physical education classes.

The sixth grade began walking from Anchorage to Nome, a distance of 1049 miles, when school began in late August. We walk either in an outside, covered quadrangle or in one of the 2 gyms on campus. Seventeen laps around the quadrangle complete a mile while nineteen laps in the gyms equal a mile. Students self-report their numbers of laps to their second or third block teachers who record the

laps on a form generated by Martha Dobson, a sixth grade teacher. Teachers or students "do the math" each week to compute the total number of miles their classes walked each week. Dobson charts the progress of the classes on a map of the Iditarod Trail's southern route, the route for the 2007 race. This map is posted in the sixth grade hallway.

By the end of October, classes had passed Iditarod, the halfway point of the walk, or were close to approaching it. Documentation: Information on the North Carolina's Healthy Active Child policy can be found at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/curriculum/health/resources/0504HSP07.pdf>



Alaska Schools: Walking the Iditarod Trail Healthy Living

**Assistance from the Yukon- Kuskokwim Health Corporation
<http://www.ykhc.org>**

Students in classrooms in Shageluk and other villages in Alaska participate in healthy living walking projects such as this one inspired by the Yukon - Kuskokwim Health Corporation. Students are provided with pedometers to keep track of the number of steps that they take on their trek from Anchorage to Nome.

How Does the Pedometer Work?

The pedometer keeps track of the number of steps you take each day. You can use the log provided in this packet to record your steps. Don't forget to reset the pedometer for the next day.

How many Steps Should You Get a Day?

Studies have shown that 10,000 steps a day leads to good overall levels of fitness. However, the sky is the limit and don't be afraid to set higher goals for yourself.

Steps Converted to Miles

Two thousand steps equals roughly one mile of walking. Ten

thousand steps are equal to about 4 or 5 miles of walking.

Instructions For Using the Step Counter (Pedometer)

1. Clip pedometer to waist edge of pants in the morning, make sure it is on straight.
2. Clip safety strap to pants pocket or beside pedometer on waist edge of pant and begin your day!
3. A good time to log your steps is right before bed every night.

Thanks to the Yukon - Kuskokwim Health Corporation for this information and for the worksheets that they have used for the northern route of the Iditarod.

Visit their website at:

<http://www.ykhc.org>

Phone: 907 543 6133

In Alaska: 877 543 6132

The following charts have been used in past Idita Walks.

Educator Mrs. Morgan Idita-Walking to Healthy Living

Mrs. Morgan invited students to participate in an event to promote physical fitness in the spirit of the Iditarod Sled Dog Race. The Chatham Middle School Idita-walk began the first week in February. The students were challenged to walk the distance of the trail ---1049 minutes between February 1st and the end of the race. Students needed make a commitment to walking a specific number of minutes each day. If one walked for 30 minutes each day, the goal could be reached in about 35 days.

Participants plotted their progress on a trail map, some even attempted to get to Nome before their favorite musher. Everyone who made it to Nome, (1049 mins.) was considered to be a winner, which is in reality, more than true when considering the healthy benefits to walking and/or to physical exercise and activity.

To participate in this project, students had to register with Mrs. Morgan. They were given an official “Musher Log” to keep track of the minutes, as well as an Iditarod trail map to keep track of their progress.

Students finishing the ‘race’ also received an Idita –Walk T-Shirt.

Communicating with parents is always important! Mrs. Morgan contacted the parents to tell them about the project. She also enlisted volunteers to help in several ways:

To remove barriers that might prevent students from participating, Mrs. Morgan asked for parent volunteers who’d be willing to supervise 30 minute walks. This also had the added benefit of getting adults walking, too.

Second, since funding t-shirts for students who finished the race, an Idita-Walk logo was created. Mrs. Morgan asked for parent volunteers to help iron on the transfer to the shirts.

Mrs. Morgan also created a ‘Trail Standings’ chart to list the names of the students and adults taking the Idita-Walk challenge. This served as a visual for everyone involved in the project as well as a way to track and celebrate progress.

To learn more about Mrs. Morgan’s projects, visit the website: <http://www.chathamma.com/itarod/>

Mrs. Morgan is currently involved in a podcast project for her school district. You can learn about that project by visiting the following website:

<http://www.chatham.k12.ma.us/%7Emorgan/podcast/podcast.htm>

Mrs. Mogan provided us with a worksheet to show how students in the Idita-Walk project kept track of their progress.

Checkpoints	Distance Between Checkpoints	Distance From Anchorage	Distance To Nome
Anchorage to Eagle River	20 minutes	20 minutes	1131 minutes
Eagle River to Wasilla (By vehicle)	29 minutes	49 minutes	1102 minutes
Wasilla to Knik	14 minutes	63 minutes	1088 minutes
Knik to Yentna	52 minutes	115 minutes	1036 minutes
Yentna Station to Skwentna	34 minutes	149 minutes	1002 minutes
Skwentna to Finger Lake	45 minutes	194 minutes	957 minutes
Finger Lake to Rainy Pass	30 minutes	224 minutes	927 minutes
Rainy Pass to Rohn	48 minutes	272 minutes	879 minutes
Rohn to Nikolai	93 minutes	365 minutes	786 minutes
Nikolai to McGrath	48 minutes	413 minutes	738 minutes
McGrath to Takotna	23 minutes	436 minutes	715 minutes
Takotna to Ophir	38 minutes	474 minutes	677 minutes
Ophir to Cripple	60 minutes	534 minutes	617 minutes
Cripple to Ruby	112 minutes	646 minutes	505 minutes
Ruby to Galena	52 minutes	698 minutes	453 minutes
Galena to Nulato	52 minutes	750 minutes	401 minutes
Nulato to Kaltag	42 minutes	792 minutes	359 minutes
Kaltag to Unalakleet	90 minutes	882 minutes	269 minutes
Unalakleet to Shaktoolik	40 minutes	922 minutes	229 minutes
Shaktoolik to Koyuk	58 minutes	980 minutes	171 minutes
Koyuk to Elim	48 minutes	1028 minutes	123 minutes
Elim to Golovin	28 minutes	1056 minutes	95 minutes
Golovin to White Mountain	18 minutes	1074 minutes	77 minutes
White Mountain to Safety	55 minutes	1129 minutes	22 minutes
Safety to Nome	22 minutes	1151 minutes	0 minutes
Total:	1151 minutes		

Research, Resources and Tips For Idita- Walks And Healthy Living

What Does Research Say?

Research supports that when students are involved in daily “quality” physical education that activity can improve student performance and perhaps even impact test scores. (Eric Jensen, Teaching with the Brain in Mind and Learning with the Body in Mind)

It is also suggested (Caterino and Polak, 1999) that physical activities such as jumping, running, and aerobic game playing stimulate parts of the brain suggesting cognitive benefits of physical exercise. Although research also suggests that a child’s mental focus and concentration levels improve after engaging in structured physical activity, you already knew that simply by being a teacher.

Good teachers know that when students sit in their desks without opportunity to move around, many students lose their focus on the learning. You also know that movement brought about by hands on activities, group work, or simply moving around in the classroom environment also impacts a student’s ability to concentrate and to learn.

Since Eighty five percent of school age children are natural kinesthetic learners (Hannaford) it is good teaching sense, to provide as many opportunities as possible for activities that allows students to move and not sit still in their desks.

Small tasks such as getting out of one’s desk, walking down the hall, moving a small sled from one checkpoint to the next, and returning to one’s classroom, is movement that keeps the student energized and learning.

Idita walks and other projects make good teaching and learning sense!

Idita Walk and Other Healthy Projects: Check out this resource:

Nome Idita- Walk: Each year this project is run. Students around the world have participated in the project. <http://www.idita-walk.com> Add canine fun and walk a dog! Some years, an Idita- Swim has been held, too. To do this, one can chart minutes swimming or laps around a pool to equate to miles to the trail.

REMEMBER:

Use what research says about the brain and learning as you plan your lessons and as you teach the students.

Use what research says about staying healthy and incorporate that into your lessons, your classroom environment, and into your expectations for students.

Consider NOT taking recess away from students as a punishment or an opportunity for a student to work on academics.

Making Time To Remember the Trail

By Terrie Hanke

2006 WFTOTT™

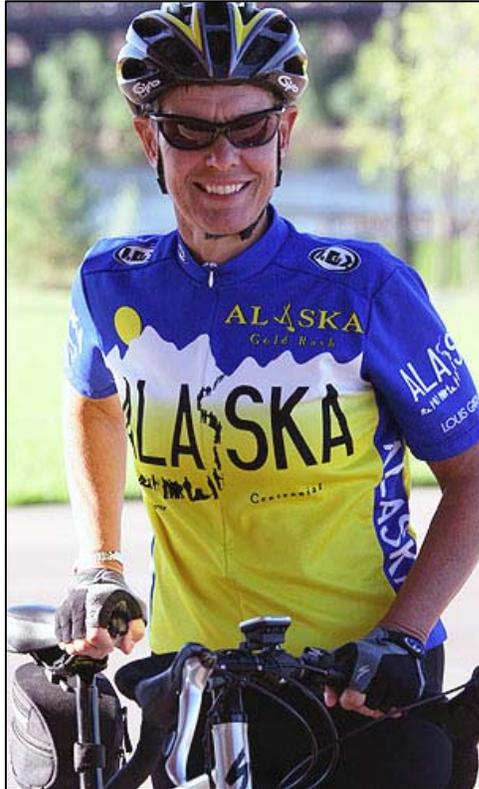
There was so much happening each and every day on the trail for Iditarod 2006, it was impossible to appreciate, process and give meaning to all that I saw and experienced. Before the race began, I heard from previous Teachers on the Trail. Their messages all contained one common theme about the journey I was soon to embark upon - take time to appreciate, take time to enjoy and take time to reflect. I should have followed their advice but I had a job to do and there was never a break in the action. I needed to observe all that was happening, take everything in and communicate on a daily basis through the Iditarod website with classrooms around the world. If I could post my message from the trail each night by midnight Alaska Time, there would be new information, discussion questions and activities waiting for teachers and students when they arrived at school the next morning.

Once the race ended and I was back at home in Wisconsin teaching Physical Education again at North High School, I began to contemplate what I might do to appreciate, enjoy and reflect upon my time on the trail. How could I create time to remember the race, the villages, the villagers, the dog teams, the mushers, the volunteers, the vets, the checkpoints, the scenery, the exhilarating moments, the trying times and all of the unique experiences that only a few people have had the opportunity to experience?

Being committed to daily aerobic exercise, I decided to take time to remember the trail while riding my bike - riding 2098 miles, twice the distance of the 1049-mile Iditarod trail on the rural roads of Wisconsin.

Like the students who follow the Iditarod and track their mushers as they progress along the trail, I charted my progress from Willow, the race restart, to Nome and back to Willow again using a map and computer spreadsheet.

While riding, I knew what portion of the trail I was covering and had plenty of quality time to recall the people I met and all that I experienced at the checkpoints, in the villages and flying with the Iditarod Air Force.



While on the trail last winter, my time went to writing the material for the *Teachers and Kids* section of the Iditarod Website leaving no time or energy to write a personal journal. Upon reaching each checkpoint on this Iditarod bike journey, I've recorded special memories and embedded pictures to create a trail journal for myself.

I cherish each of the 2098 miles I've ridden this summer and the time I had to appreciate, enjoy and reflect upon my journey as the 2006 Wells Fargo Teacher On The Trail™.

The RACE To Meet Goals

Diane Johnson

2000 WFTOTT™

Teachers are always helping students to set goals, develop plans to meet, them, and chart progress. Iditarod becomes an engaging way to work towards meeting goals while following the Iditarod Trail. The following project was completed as an all school project during the 1999-2000 school year and was submitted by Diane Johnson, 2000 Wells Fargo Teacher on the Trail.™

All School Project: May Overby Elementary School, Aberdeen School District, Aberdeen, South Dakota - 1999 -2000

As one way to celebrate the Iditarod and help students to recognize the importance of setting and accomplishing goals, our entire school participated in a goal setting race from Anchorage to Nome!

Each teacher selected goals for students and/or assisted students to select their own goals. The goals were age appropriate, some being learning goals like showing improvement in daily work or passing a spelling test. Some goals were designed to allow students to demonstrate responsibility such as bringing signed papers back to school from home, or specific behavior expectations. The goals could be individual or group goals. The goals were entirely up to the teacher and the students, some goals easy to meet, others more difficult.

Each student in our school was given a laminated paper sled. Each classroom chose a different color for sleds to help create an immediate easy to find visual of how students were doing on their goals.

I created a check point map and a check point sign for each location along the Iditarod Trail. These signs were hung at various locations around our school. Anchorage was located near the front door of our school next to the school office. Each person entering our school building immediately saw our goal setting project.



Up and down the halls of our school, the checkpoint signs were hung in order of checkpoint along the route signifying the race trail to meeting goals. No matter where in the school you walked, you were near a section of Iditarod Trail to meeting goals.

After students made their list of goals, each student hung their individual sled in Anchorage and began working on steps to meet goals.

When a student met a goal, the student was allowed to go into the hallway to the checkpoint where their personal sled was waiting and move the sled to the next checkpoint along the trail headed towards the final destination, Nome, which is located in our gym / lunch room.

Wanting the students to understand short term and long term goals as well as the fact that meeting goals is sometimes a long process or that one goal might be connected to other goals, we began this project of mushing the Iditarod Trail to meet goals the fall of the year. We expected and wanted students to understand the process of goal setting, steps in the process, and evaluation of goals along the way. We wanted students to have a mixture of 'easy' to meet goals and harder goals. We wanted the process to demonstrate as in real life, it takes time to meet goals. We expected most would reach Nome after months of hard work.

Teachers provided small trail maps to the students. When a student met a goal, the student recorded progress on individual maps of the Iditarod Trail by putting a sticker on the corresponding checkpoint on the map. This strengthened map skills, developed organizational skills, and emphasized taking pride in accomplishments. Some teachers charted the progress the 'class' made. Some created math problems about the progress of the sleds.

To celebrate accomplishments, an end of the year goal celebration can be held to show recognition to students for working hard at meeting goals. Certificates can be made and distributed to students in an all school celebration or an individual classroom event.

* The goals we chose for the students were goals that our students would be working on every year, things we were already doing. Our emphasis was on individuals meeting goals and being proud of their accomplishments. Everyone can be a winner, just as every team making it to Nome is a winner. It would not matter who reached Nome first/ met your goal first, but rather that you reached Nome, met your goals, and felt good about what you had learned and accomplished.

* You can create a project such as this for individual classroom on a smaller scale. Individual student goals, pages read, flash cards completed, or projects assembled can be used as criteria to move along the Iditarod Trail.

***As I walked into school one morning, I was met outside by a young student. "Mrs. Johnson," she called, "I get to move my sled to the next check point today! I feel great!" Her twinkling eyes, her wide smile, and her excited voice reassured me that this project was Idita - great! Walking down the halls and seeing those sleds moving along our Idita - Trail, I was proud of the accomplishments our students made along their personal learning trails!
Diane Johnson, January, 2000.

IDITAROD MATH RELAY

Practice Math Skills While Racing to Nome! Best Worksheet Ever!

You know the drill and you've heard the complaints as students open up their math book and turn to page whatever--- to do problems 1 – 26.

Try something different.

Ask students to get with a partner or with a small group. Give each student an Iditarod Trail map. Tell the students they are about to be entered into the Iditarod Math Relay.

Direction:

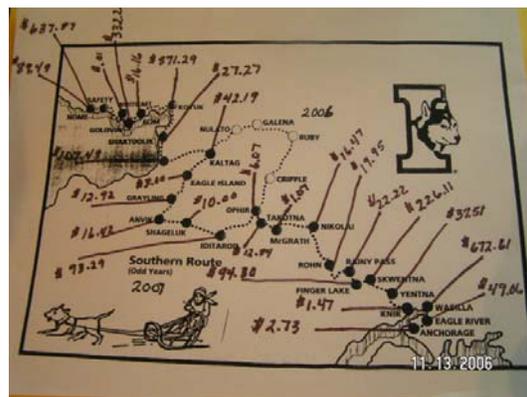
You've taught the lesson. It is time for the students to practice the math skill or practice a skill or review skills.

You need: 30 – 45 minutes of working time, or an adjusted amount of time according to the difficulty of the assignment.

Pass out the trail maps and make the assignment. Students must complete the problems in the assignment and write the answer on the trail map, one answer for each checkpoint on the map. When students have completed a math problem for each checkpoint and placed the answers on the map, they 'race' to Nome--- you or the 'checking station' to see if they have finished the race by having correct answers.

Start correcting with the answer for Anchorage and continue checking the work going in order along the race trail.

If a group has an incorrect answer, the group must erase that answer and go back to their working area. Do not continue checking the paper. The students are at a mandatory rest stop. They must either redo the problem or complete a similar problem. At this point, students might want to 'check' the remaining problems before returning to have their paper checked by you at 'Nome'.



Each group that 'finishes' the race with a correct answer at each checkpoint on their map, are official Iditarod Finishers.

This activity can be completed in other curriculum areas, answering questions in Social Studies or Science text books, for example.

Something to think about: Does it matter which 26 problems students complete on a page in the text book? If the answer is no, empower the students to pick and choose the problems they want to do. If your goal is to practice, and students are involved in choosing their own problems, they are more engaged in what they are doing because they have been involved in the decisions.

Steps in Planning Iditarod Races and Ikidarods

Steps in planning your Ikidarod

1. Identify your project goals and the content or cultural standards that will be the focus of your project.
2. Use a lesson plan template to organize and document your project.
3. Enlist the assistance of the students in the planning.
4. Identify volunteers that can assist your class. (Parents, staff, other classrooms)
5. Communicate with parents. Share your event with the media.
6. Have FUN as your class learns from this experience!
7. We would enjoy seeing your lesson plan and hearing about your project. Send us digital images (with permission for us to use) or copies of any media coverage your event receives. We enjoy tracking the success of projects.

Classroom Project Reviews:

Each year, there are many Iditarod IKIDAROD and race simulations held around the world. The following sites provide you with information about some of those projects. Use the sites and information as research material. As with all of our lesson ideas, we intend for you to use the ideas and align them to your particular standards and objectives.

(*Remember, the Internet is an ever changing source of information. The sites we are providing you with are subject to change. Doing a search on the Internet may lead you to other projects. ** When you follow links at this site, you will be leaving Iditarod's website. The links are provided to you as a learning tool and for your convenience. The inclusion of any link does not imply endorsement of the linked site. We are not responsible for maintaining the linked sites and not responsible for the contents of that site or any link contained in a linked site, or for any changes or updates to those linked sites. Supervision by teachers at school and parental supervision of students using the Internet at home is recommended and encouraged.)

Project Samples

Grand Forks, North Dakota teacher Jeanie Olson has great ideas for an Ikidarod. Mrs. Olson's plans include information on building a sled and the rules students had to follow for this project.

<http://www2.grand-forks.k12.nd.us/Iditarod/kidrod.html>

Colorado View pictures of a 2004 race simulation for ideas about holding your own race.

<http://schools.bvsd.org/douglass/ikidarod2004/slideshow/index.html>

New Hampshire: Read an article about students in New Hampshire and their school Ikidarod.

<http://www.yourneighborhoodnews.com/bedford-bulletin/2005/03/news/31-fifth-graders-ikidarod.html>

California: Educator Suzi Owen designed a fantastic project for students. Suzi was a 2000 Finalist for Wells Fargo Teacher on the Trail.

<http://www3.scoe.net/Iditarod/lessons.htm>

An American School in Japan:

Even in Japan, students study the Iditarod! Check out the school's website and view pictures of the students involved in their version of the Iditarod.

http://www.asij.ac.jp/elementary/gr3web/c3d/galleries_05_06/Iditarod/index.htm

McGrath, Alaska: For the past twenty years, students in McGrath have been involved in a Mini-Iditarod. First grade students become the mushers. Second grade students are the checkers. Third grade students are the vets. Students in each of the grades have tasks. Listen to Judy Kuhn, a teacher from McGrath, tell about the project by listening to the video clip: AN INSPIRATIONAL TEACHER, found in the Insider Library.

Each year, an IKIDAROD is held at Peter Woodbury School in NH. Fifth grade students compete as part of their culminating project following a standards driven unit connecting the theme of Iditarod to their curriculum.

“We end this two week unit by conducting our own "Ikidarod Race", whereby each fifth grade homeroom builds a sled. The sled must follow the same basic rules as the sleds of the Iditarod, in that they must carry enough food, water, booties, blankets, and supplies for the musher and dogs.

Each homeroom votes on a musher and the rest of the kids act as dogs or checkpoint people. The "dogs", are harnessed to the sled and pull it across our playground along our Ikidarod course. They stop at different checkpoints along the way, and pull out chance cards to see what happens. They may have to eat a snack or get water, which the musher must distribute to each dog, or they may get the sleep card, where each dog must be laying on the ground and covered up by the musher. There are other cards to choose from as well, some with longer checkpoint activities and some with shorter.

The winner of the race is the team with the shortest time, and the last place team gets to hang on to the Red Lantern until the next school year's Ikidarod. It really is a wonderful experience for our fifth graders, and younger kids come out to see the big race with their parents. It's a terrific way to end a unit, and is looked forward to by teachers, parents, and students alike.” Jen Asdot, Ginny Toland, Cathy Fields, Amy Moquin, and Kim Draper, Grade 5 Teachers **Read about the project!**

<http://www.yourneighborhoodnews.com/bedford-bulletin/2005/03/news/31-fifth-graders-ikidarod.html>

What about YOU?

If you or your students have been involved in a project such as this, we'd enjoy hearing from you.

Send us your project information.

Include information to help us understand the connection you made with the standards that your students must learn.

Secure permission to send us digital images of your students so that we may share the images of your project with our viewers. We won't identify your students.

Some schools have sent us a video recording of your race. We'd enjoy seeing that example, too! With your permission, we'd like to share these kinds of projects at our teacher conferences.

If you get media coverage of your 'race event', we'd enjoy reading about you. Send us the link or a copy of the article to us:

**djohnson@iditarod.com
Iditarod Education Office
1412 S. Melgaard Road
Aberdeen, SD 57401**

We congratulate you as an educator that works hard to create unique curriculum projects that are aligned with the standards that you teach. You are teaching with research based methods that impact the academic success of your students.

MUSH ON!

Idita-Luck

Luck Elementary, Luck, Wisconsin
Carolyn Peterson

Since the students in Carolyn Peterson's class are from LUCK, Wisconsin, it is only fitting that this Iditarod Race that is held at their school is called the Idita-Luck.



Carolyn Peterson, the teacher who created and leads the Idita-Luck activities is no "rookie" to dog sledding. She used to have sled dogs but sold them a few years ago to musher Todd Capistrant, who ran the Iditarod about three years after he purchased her dogs. Since he hadn't been 'into dog sledding' before that, Carolyn enjoys believing that she and her dogs played an instrumental role in his dog mushing adventures.

In the Idita-Luck race, the students use Carolyn's real dogsled and gangline. Four students play the role of the "dogs". One student plays the role of the musher. The team runs the Idita-Luck race.

Students race one team at a time. They start on their field at a goal post and race to the other end, circling the goal post and coming back. The race route is equivalent to about a 200 yard dash. The rules state that if a dog cannot continue, the musher must put it in the basket. The musher must hang on to the sled at all times.



The winners get the trophy presented to them by their teacher.

Carolyn found an old trophy at Goodwill and took the little figurine off the top of it. She replaced the figurine with a dog biscuit. On the base of the trophy, the year, the winning time, and names of the team members are written. Carolyn also bought a red lantern. The names of the students who finish last are written on the Red Lantern.



Red Lantern Winners!

This exciting race is held at the end of the Iditarod unit. Students are excited about the races and enjoy participating in the event.



Running in the Idita-Luck takes team work!



Wisconsin's snow provides a great trail for the race, creating the perfect Wisconsin racing adventure!



Students involved in this great project are dressed for adventures in learning!

What activities are completed during Carolyn's unit? Students study about the Iditarod using the internet sites and complete activities. They also read Gary Paulsen's book, Woodson.

Last year, Carolyn received funds as part of a technology grant. They incorporated using Power Point to make presentations about the Iditarod. This was a very successful project for the students.

Carolyn Peterson's students have been involved in many exciting lessons over the past 18 years that she has been using this theme to connect classroom learning. Students have made dog booties, mixed and baked their own dog biscuits, had Iditarod legend Dewey Halvorson come to their school, met local mushers, and many more activities.. Todd Capistrant also visited their school and spoke with students.



Todd autographs pictures for the students during his 2003 visit to the school.

The Idita-Luck is a successful project that provides quality lessons that are deeply cored in the content standards and lead students to academic success while having MUSH-MUCH fun in Wisconsin!

Iditarod Simulation

By Marty Verdoorn
St. Charles, Illinois

Finalist for 2005 Wells Fargo Teacher on the Trail™

As a finalist for 2005 Wells Fargo Teacher on the Trail™, Marty shared the incredible race simulation activity from her school in Illinois. An outside “Iditarod Trail” was created around the school.



Putting together a simulation such as this takes a great deal of teamwork and effort by adults long before the students begin the race. The principal, parents, teachers, and staff pitched in to help create the sleds, the trail, the rules, and all of the activities.



Parents got involved by taking on the job of race officials and other jobs.

Older students in the school volunteered for jobs as vets or as cooks in checkpoints.



Some students played the role of a blizzard that blocked the trail.



Prior to the ‘opening ceremonies’, the student mushers were required to arrive in the school gym where the race officials inspected the sled.



The adult constructed sleds had wheels so they could go over the ‘terrain’ along the schools’ Iditarod Trail. A box on the sled contained necessary supplies to be used at the checkpoints.



Students had to know what to do if a “Principal Bear” suddenly appeared on the trail in front of them!



The musher had to watch out for moose, too, which often made the trail ‘dangerous’ and giving opportunities for problem solving situations.



It is obvious that long before the students started down the trail, hours and hours of preparation went into the race simulation for the adults and for the students involved in the race.

Students participated in many group activities prior to race day including: filling out entry forms, getting their dogs ‘examined’ by the vets, knowing the race rules and packing their sleds. Items in their sled were similar to the items that would be in a musher’s sled during a race.

Marty also created penalties that race officials could charge to the racers. For example, if a team were off the trail, they could get a 5 second penalty. If they didn't follow the rules they could get a minute penalty added to their total race time.



The dogs took their 24 hour lay over or 'long' naps at some checkpoints. Long rests gave them plenty of energy to continue!



There were always plenty of things to do while at the checkpoints.



Mushers know that taking care of dogs is very important!

Checkpoints are very busy places!

On the Iditarod Trail, the musher was serious and the dog team had the focus! The race was on!



After reaching ‘Nome’ a celebration banquet was held and the mushers and teams received their awards.



A great deal of pride exists with students when they accomplish a project such as this. Marty congratulated the students for meeting the goals of this Iditarod Simulation.

Once the race was over, school work still continued. Students had to reflect on their race by writing about it. They also wrote thank you notes to adults who helped with the race.



Although the culminating activity of the race simulation and celebration take about an afternoon to complete, the lessons taught in curriculum areas before and during the race, and the lessons after the simulation are evidence that a thematic unit such as this is a tool to enhance all areas of the curriculum.

"I'll See You In Nome!"

~ (Iditarod Simulation)

Standard:

- *District Social Studies Standard 1: Students understand rights and responsibilities as a member of a community.*
- *District Social Studies Standard 2: Students understand that ideas, beliefs, and traditions, define who people are.*
- *District Social Studies Standard 3: Students will explain how people's actions affect and are influenced by systems.*
- *District Social Studies Standard 4: Students understand the impact of change on people's lives.*
- *District Social Studies Standard 5: Students solve problems, communicate, use technology, work on teams and make connections as they show an understanding of how, where we live, affects how we live.*
- *District Writing Standard 1: Students use a wide range of strategies and different writing process elements to compose well-organized and coherent writing.*
- *District Writing Standard 2: Students produce effective written communication for specific purposes in a variety of genre*
- *District Writing Standard 3: Students apply knowledge of conventions of written language*

Learner Outcomes:

- Students will plan, prepare, strategize, and present a simulation of the Iditarod to their parents, other students and the local press.

Time Frame:

- Simulation Planning - 3 weeks
- Simulation Presentation - 1 /2 day
- Simulation Reflection - 1 week (depending on assessments used)

Grade Level:

- 4th grade - Adapt as necessary

Big Ideas/Background Information:

- Simulations provide a stimulating, active, engagement of all students and help to deepen the meaning of something learned. This is a culminating activity for the entire Alaska/Iditarod study.
- Students will need to have a good understanding of Alaska to have a feel for where the race takes place and must know the aspects of race history, preparation, rules and guidelines. Students must have background knowledge of the participants - dogs, mushers and volunteers.
- Much planning and time will be spent by the teacher to prepare all aspects of this simulation

Materials needed:

- Background information on the race, rules, and preparation from the Iditarod website
- Included packet of materials (modify as necessary)
- Jump ropes and Hula-Hoops
- Scooters, Wagons, or built sleds on wheels
- Student supplies from home - Mushers wear bicycle helmets for added safety
- Many volunteers
- "Let Me Introduce Myself" - Lesson packet for Musher/Dog Bio
- "Have I Got a Story For You!" (Tales from the Trail) - Lesson packet for Narrative writing of simulation
- Reflection on the Iditarod - simulation sheet
- Rubrics for Narrative piece

Activating and Engaging:

- Students are assigned teams ~1J#assume the role of either a dog or a musher"

Procedures:

- Pre-Race - Teams plan, strategize, and prepare all aspects of race readiness.
 - Teams are given hula- hoops and jump ropes and must plan their harness and position of their "dogs" on the team. Mushers must schedule an appointment with the 'Vet' (who is the school nurse) and they are checked for their physical condition and to make sure that all vaccinations are up to date. The "musher" completes an entry form complete with the dog's names, ages, vet certification and entry fee (we use our 'Scholar Dollars' from my classroom incentive program). They get all supplies together, (dog booties, or surgical slippers, are donated from a local doctor and other supplies model what the mushers must have in their basket), train with their sled, (made by a parent last year) and plan their race strategy.
 - Mushers and dogs write their own biography suitable for publication on the wall in the hallway .
- During Race - Students present their version of the race to their parents, the entire school, and the general public.
 - Last year we had a ceremonial start for Idit-a-riders. In order to buy the supplies for a parent to build us sleds we held an Idit-a-rider Auction. We had a ceremony and the Idit-a-riders got to take a ride on the sleds around the gym before the race began. Students began with a short presentation about what we have studied and why, we gave thanks to all the volunteers, and a special thanks to our master sled builder and contributors to the "sled fund".
 - Our "Starter", with a history and background of the team individuals introduces teams. Teams are started at 2- minute intervals in Anchorage (the gym) and are cheered for as they leave (go out the door to the playground area) and head for Nome (the activity center). The race trail includes 5 checkpoints around the school grounds. Mushers must complete tasks at each checkpoint as in the real race, such as checking in and out, dog care duties, and resting and taking care of themselves. Time is kept with stopwatches. Mushers must state the length of their stay and their race official monitors tasks completed and time taken.
 - Parents supply food for the mushers at the checkpoints (meat, cheese crackers, carrots, grapes, sweet treats, and water - a well-balanced meal) and dog food ("puppy chow"). My former 4th graders, now 5th graders become the cooks and vets at the checkpoints and the "fates" encountered along the trail, such as moose, bear, blizzards, overflow, etc. Parents act as the press, race officials, and spectators. There is huge involvement from the parents and the school.
- Post Race - Race Banquet in the Recreation Center in Nome.
 - Parents prepare a banquet in my classroom. Awards are given (a Certificate of Participation and Completion) to the "Top 5 teams". (That's all of them!) We have a cake specially made, mushers get to eat the dog food (puppy chow) and the dogs get to eat the musher food. We always make plenty of extra people and dog food so they can have some more.

Assessment for Understanding:

- The next day we process what happened, how their strategies worked and what they would change for their next race, how teams worked together, and what they learned by this simulation. We do this in two ways:
 - Students reflect independently using the reflection form
 - Use that form as a basis for discussion
- Students write their "Tales from the Trail" from their viewpoint as a dog or musher.

Reflections on the Iditarod

Name _____

Members of your team: _____

1. What did your team have to do to prepare for this big event?
2. How did your team use teamwork?
3. What evidence did you see of cooperation within your team?
4. What did your team do well?
5. What strategies did you use?
6. What would you do differently if you were to run the race again?
7. Give each team member a compliment.
8. What did you learn about:
 - a. Alaska
 - b. The Iditarod
 - c. Life in Alaska
 - d. Working together
 - e. People