

2005 IDITAROD SUMMER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE June 20 - 25, 2005

Teachers have gathered from all around the United States to attend the Iditarod Summer Professional Development Conference to learn about the race and how to use Iditarod as a theme for instruction. Teacher Johnson, 2000 TOTT(tm), handled the morning sessions which included getting acquainted and standards based thematic instruction.



Guest Speaker Walter McKenzie shared information on Multiple. We all have the nine intelligences- verbal, logical, visual, musical, kinesthetic, naturalist, intrapersonal, interpersonal and existential with some being more developed than others. With the Iditarod as a theme, activities can be tailored for each of the intelligences. This information challenged us to develop each of the intelligences in our classroom activities.

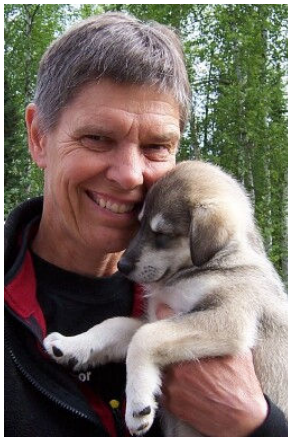
Blogging, Wikis and WebQuests are technology based activities that connect all the intelligences and facilitate authentic learning. When blogging, individuals electronically publish personal thoughts and web links. The name evolves from web log. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia created by posting information. When information is posted, it is checked for accuracy then becomes part of the encyclopedia for others to read. The Iditarod segment of Wikipedia far exceeds the same topic in hardcopy encyclopedias. Wiki is a Hawaiian word meaning easy. A WebQuest is an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that students interact with comes from resources on the Internet. The goal is extending and refining knowledge. Students analyze a body of knowledge and transform it into a work that makes sense. They have real resources to work with and can post information for feedback.

Information on multiple intelligences can be found on Walter McKenzie's web site www.surfaquarium.com.



Conference participants had the opportunity to interact with both past and present Teachers on The Trail™. Andrea Auf der-Heyde "Finney" conceived the idea of having a teacher on the trail and convinced the Iditarod Trail Committee to allow her to follow the race from start to finish in 1999 and share the happenings with teachers and students. Finney shared her experiences as the first TOTT during our visit to Plettner Kennels. Finney is spending her summer at Plettner's to learn even more about the great canine athletes. She lives in Bloomington, Indiana and teaches 2nd grade.

Diane Johnson, TOTTM 2000, facilitates the Iditarod Education Conferences. She shared her experiences while on the trail in 2000 and as a checkpoint worker during 2004 at Shaktoolik. Diane uses Iditarod to incorporate character education in her classroom. She provided many examples of how Iditarod can be used as a theme to meet No Child Left Behind criteria through quality standards based instruction. Diane serves on Iditarod's Education Committee and is the mentor for the teacher that is preparing to go out on the trail. Diane teaches 5th grade in Aberdeen, South Dakota.



Current Teacher on The Trail, Terrie Hanke was on hand to share her experiences to date as well as her calendar for lesson posting during the school year. Terrie has had the opportunity to visit many classrooms to share her experiences from the start and restart of the 2005 Iditarod. Terrie handles dogs at Just Guts Kennel in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and teaches 9-12 Physical Education.

Conference participants were encouraged to consider applying for TOTTM. Finney, Diane and Terrie shared helpful hints and ideas concerning the application and interview process. The common theme emphasized by Finney, Diane and Terrie was that being

ToTTTM is a life enhancing experience both professionally and personally.

Alaska Natives are the only indigenous people of the United States who haven't been relocated to reservations by the federal government. According to *Alaska Geographic*, Alaska Natives still live, hunt and fish on the lands of their ancestors. Many still speak their ancestral languages, perform ancestral dances, tell ancestral stories and practice age-old values handed down through generations. At the same time, they are also members of the modern world and hold jobs, embrace technology and use the tools of a global economy. In her presentation, Shannon Keene helped conference participants take a closer look at the rich and diverse cultures of Alaska's various Native groups and how they continue cultural practices and activities within the context of contemporary society. Shannon taught in the coastal village of Kotzebue for 15 years before moving to the Mat-Su Valley.



Popular author, Gary Paulson spoke to conference participants. Gary told us that as an adolescent, school didn't work for him. One cold afternoon while delivering newspapers he went into the public library to get warm. The librarian asked him if he'd like a library card. He left the library that afternoon with not only a card but with a book. Gary couldn't read very well but he finally got through the book and returned to the library to get another followed by another and still another. Gary shared stories of his childhood, being a starving author, doing the Iditarod, writing books for young readers and his current desire to return to the great race. Gary is a not to be missed colorful speaker!





"Hands on" best describes our experience at Plettner Kennels. Lynda, being an 11 time finisher of the Iditarod has a wealth of experience and knowledge to share. Lynda trains aspiring mushers and also rents teams to mushers like Do Do Perry from Italy who ran Iditarod 2005. Everybody loves puppies, teachers included! That was evident as we held and cuddled the summer puppies. Contact with humans at that age is important in socializing the little dogs. We saw a great display of sleds ranging from the old, heavy more rigid styles to the modern light, flexible models that mushers use today. Lynda displayed and talked about her clothing system, boots, cooking gear and food for her self and the dogs. Each participant had the opportunity to place wrist wraps and booties on a dog then harness a dog and bring it to the gangline for a training run with a four wheeler. Had there been more time we would have participated in and learn about puppy training.

Our field trip took in the Dorothy Page Museum in Wasilla and concluded at Iditarod headquarters with a ride behind a Raymie Redington dog team. The hands on experience of this field trip is something that most teachers using the Iditarod as a theme for instruction only dream about.

Participants were privileged to hear a variety of speakers on the final full day of the conference. Speakers included chief Iditarod Veterinarian, Stuart Nelson, rookie musher Daytona Dayton, three time Iditarod Champion Jeff King along with his daughters and 2005 Iditarod participant - Rachael Scdoris.

Dr. Nelson shared slides of the race while he told of the care the dogs receive before, during and after the race. Nelson has a staff of about 35 volunteer veterinarians who are specially trained in the care of sled dogs. The dogs receive physicals at every checkpoint. The vets use the acronym HAW & L in the assessment of the canine athletes. The "H" signifies heart and hydration. During the pre-race physicals, each dog is given an EKG to monitor heart function. Hydration can be tested using the snap test - pinch a fold of fur and skin between the shoulders, pull it up away from the body and let go. The skin of a dog that's properly hydrated snaps back into place immediately. The skin of a dehydrated animal will remain standing like a little tent. The "A" stands for appetite and attitude. The vet seeks information from the musher as to how the dog has been eating and pulling. The "W" means weight. Vets check the dogs to make sure they're maintaining their weight. If a dog can't maintain its weight during the race, its performance will be adversely affected. The "L" directs the vet to the dog's legs. Vets will again ask the driver if there is any concerns about how the dogs are running - any limps or other abnormalities. If so, the vets test the affected joints. Based on this information, the vets can advise the mushers as to whether a questionable dog should remain with the team or be dropped. Dr Nelson gave an excellent presentation filled with technical information at a layperson's level. He is passionate about his work and places the well being of the animal athletes above all else.

Radio talk show host Daytona Dayton shared stories of challenges she has faced as a child, single parent, NASCAR mechanic and race care driver. Daytona has now turned her sights and energy toward training to do the Iditarod in 2006. She has chosen Vern Halter as her mentor and trainer. In mid-June, Dayton moved to Dream of Dreams Kennel owned and operated by Halter and his family to begin her training. Daytona has created the Team America challenge for students in classroom across the country. For more information about Team America and to track Daytona's progress as she trains and prepares for Iditarod 06, check www.daytona-n-friends.com. Good luck Daytona, you go girl!

Mushers Jeff King, Cali King and Rachael Scdoris shared their perspectives of Iditarod with participants. Jeff is recognized as the "Winningest Musher in the World." He has three Iditarod championships. Daughters Kali, Tessa and Ellen share their father's love of mushing. Cali and Tessa have both competed in the Junior Iditarod. Cali placed 32nd in her rookie 2003 Iditarod. It's an incredible feat for a high school student to balance training dogs, academics and athletics! During the summer, the Kings welcome visitors from around the world to tour their kennel and learn about mushing and the Alaskan Sled Dog.

Since the age of 8, Rachel Scdoris has dreamed of running the Iditarod. Having a rare vision disorder, Rachel is colorblind, extremely light sensitive with visual acuity of 20/200. Not completely blind, Rachel can vaguely see about as far ahead as her lead dog. The Iditarod Trail Committee adopted a rule to allow case-by-case consideration of accommodations for disabled athletes. If the safety of the racer or the racer's dogs is not compromised, if the nature of the competition is not altered and if the changes would not give the disabled person an advantage, accommodations can be made to allow participation for disabled mushers. This rule change allowed Scdoris to use a visual interpreter or spotter for the race. Her spotter, Paul Ellering, used a two-way radio to alert her to hazards such as low-hanging tree branches or sharp turns in the course. One member of the Iditarod Trail Committee said about allowing Rachael to use a spotter, "I don't see it any different than my putting on a pair of glasses, as long as they don't provide her any other assistance." On the other hand, five time Iditarod champion Rick Swenson was not in favor of allowing spotters on the trail saying it would set a precedent for bending the rules. At Eagle Island, Rachel made the decision to scratch from her rookie Iditarod, saying, "Every person there could see it's not an eye thing. It's a my-dogs-are-sick thing." The combination of soft snow and the fact that her dogs were thinner than she wanted caused her to scratch. Knowing that she couldn't get enough fuel into them to continue on safely, she made the difficult but good decision. Rachel was in Alaska at the time of the summer conference to sign-up for the 2006 Iditarod.

The final Saturday of June brings mushers and volunteers to Iditarod Headquarters in Wasilla for the volunteer picnic and the beginning of musher signup. Conference goers had the opportunity to collect autographs and take pictures of the mushers as well as talk to volunteers about their experiences and jobs along the trail. Some of the teachers attending the conference jumped at the opportunity to become volunteers for the 2006 Iditarod by counting ballots early in the morning prior to the annual ITC membership meeting. The food for the summer picnic was catered by Outback Steak House and there

were door prizes for everyone. What a great event to conclude an awesome professional development conference!



With nearly 24 hours of daylight, conference participants were on the go well into the evening hours! Conference facilitators provided numerous suggestions as to what to see and do. Activities were numerous, I'll list a few. Visiting the Jon Van Zyle Studio to meet the official Iditarod artist and his wife Jona, play with the dogs in their kennel and purchase artwork. Meeting Martin Buser and Vern Halter and visiting their kennels. As you see here, Martin puts on

costumes and does a role play of a checkpoint vet. Driving to Hatcher Pass and touring Independence Mine historic site. Hiking to Thunderbird Falls. Visiting the quaint town of Talkeetna, the hub of Denali Mountain adventures (some even ate sautéed Fiddle Ferns). Touring the Anchorage Museum of History and Art and experiencing the Shaman Exhibit. Four-wheeling in the Alaskan bush. Some went salmon fishing and were successful. Every evening we enjoyed great dining - halibut and salmon were to die for!



Perhaps this summary has given you an idea of the awesome nature of the Iditarod Summer Conference for Teachers and Race Fans. Really, words don't do the experience justice. I've been fortunate to attend two of the summer conferences and one winter conference. The summer and winter conferences are very different in nature. The summer conference is truly a professional and personal development opportunity for teachers who use the Iditarod or wish to use the Iditarod as a theme for classroom instruction. It's an opportunity to gather information, revitalize and network with professionals with common goals. The winter conference is best described as an experience. Participants view first hand the vet check at Iditarod Headquarters, Plettner's Kennel Tour, the presentations of the TOTT™ finalists, the Musher's Banquet, various author's, musher's and adventurer's presentations. Being in Anchorage at the start of the race, winter conference participants experience the ceremonial start of the Iditarod and can also experience the restart if they stay through Sunday. Each conference offers a unique picture of the Iditarod.

Happy trails to you all,
Terrie