

Leap to a Healthy Heart

In February we will observe Valentine's Day and leap year. Why not combine these two special days into lessons about being heart healthy?

All Iditarod sled dogs must undergo veterinary examinations to make sure they are 100% healthy to race. A key component of this is the condition of their hearts. Iditarod rule 40 explains the pre-race veterinary exam. On the Iditarod website, under 2008 Iditarod, there is "Veterinary Corner" link which explains not only the heart health of the sled dogs, but other aspects of their health as well. Each dog has an EKG before the race. And don't forget H-A-W-L that the race vets use for dog assessment before the race and on the trail. H = heart and hydration. (A = attitude and appetite, W = weight, L = legs and lungs)

Link this to a lesson about how your students can keep their hearts healthy. The American Heart Association has many resources for teachers on their website www.americanheart.org. Look under Children's Health. There are lesson plans and resources for all curricular areas and grade levels.

How does this tie into leap year? If your students exercise (leap) their hearts will be healthier! Have them see how many times they can leap frog or leap over the jump rope. Even consider setting up Leap Olympics with different leaping activities to accomplish for medals.