

November 25, 2005

Greetings to Iditarod Educators, Students and Race Fans,

Exactly one year ago today, my Application for 2006 Teacher On The Trail™ was shipped off to the selection committee. Others of you who have just placed your application in the mail know the feeling that goes along with sending your hard work, heart and soul off to be scrutinized by others in hopes of being selected for the personal and professional opportunity of a life time. Congratulations and best wishes to all who have applied. Relax and celebrate the product you have created to represent yourself, your community, your school and your students in front of the TOT™ selection committee.



Team Cortte in Tomahawk, Wisconsin continues to train with the four-wheeler looking forward to the day when there's a foot of snow on the ground. The snow you see pictured here has come and gone. It seems that 12 inches is the magic number for preserving sled runners, braking and being able to hold a team with a snow hook. With all of the raw and excitable dog power of a team, a snow hook just isn't effective in less snow. For those who have followed the race in the recent past, you'll

remember that in 2005 the restart was moved from Wasilla to Willow to gain snow depth. Dee Dee Jonrowe commented favorably on the change because it would have been impossible to control or hold a team with a snow hook going out of Wasilla due to lack snow.

Just to give you an idea of how powerful these dog teams are, Ron Cortte says that it's a challenge to hold his 12 - 18 dog teams with a four-wheeler and Danny Seavey tells a great story about having his team tied off to his Dodge pickup truck. Generally, when mushers transport their dogs to a trail for a run, the sled will be tied off to the truck or trailer with the snub line until musher and team are ready to go. When the snub line is released you're off!

In Danny's story, the dogs were ready to go but he was finishing up preparation prior to the run. The next thing Danny knew, the team was pulling the Dodge, with its brakes set down the trail! Being a handler for the restart of the 2005 Iditarod was great experience in dog power. For each team, there are 16 dog handlers and 2 sled



handlers, along with the musher and another handler standing on the drag pad and brake to keep the dogs in check as they are released from the truck and are brought through the staging area to the start line. These canines are POWERFUL athletes!

Thinking it would be interesting to compare what mushers are doing in Alaska to prepare their teams for Iditarod to what the Wisconsin mushers are doing, I contacted a Physical Education colleague who lives and teaches in Wasilla, Alaska. Sue Allen and her husband Rich operate No Snow Kennels. Sue ran her rookie Iditarod in 2004 after training with Lynda Plettner. Kim Kittredge, K2, will be running Sue's adults in Iditarod 2006. Sue's dogs are running a 2-day on, 1 day off training schedule right now. Sue is working on "coaching" her yearlings to run and lead. Some days they practice parking and resting, some days are new leader exercises and some days they get 6 or 8 mushers together and practice passing from the behind and head on. With 32 dogs, they are running dogs every night and every weekend day. Sue and K2 are fortunate in that they are on snow with sleds doing upwards of 25-mile runs. You'll remember from a previous newsletter, Ron & Chad of Team Cortte are working on training all 50 of the Quietwood Kennel dogs to be leaders. Currently, Ron and Chad are doing 30-mile training runs with 12 - 18 dogs with the four-wheeler. Team Cortte will continue to do that trail at least 10 times before bumping up. In this photo, Baffin a leader out of Just Guts Kennel in Eau Claire, Wisconsin awaits the day when there'll be adequate snow to park the four-wheeler and get the sled out. Most mushers believe that once you're able to go from four-wheeler to sled, the dogs are capable of doubling their mileage very quickly. The sled is different for the dogs - easier and faster.



Visit the web sites for these mushers. Their sites are filled with interesting information. Sue Allen - [www.nosnowkennels.com](http://www.nosnowkennels.com); Kim Kittredge - [www.k2racing.org](http://www.k2racing.org); Team Cortte - [www.quietwoodkennels.com](http://www.quietwoodkennels.com).

**LESSONS POSTED FOR DECEMBER** December lessons include Idita-Math Challenge and Iditarod Trail. Following you'll find a brief explanation of the activities. Specific details, worksheets and standards can be found with each lesson.

**Idita-Math Challenge:** Each year, Wells Fargo of Alaska, sponsor of the Iditarod and Teacher on the Trail™, sends a packet out to schools along the Iditarod Trail. The packet includes lessons created by the TOTT™. When asked to create the lessons for the packet, it seemed they should be math oriented. So, Idita-Math Challenge includes math problems for children in grades K-8. Activities are designed on the following assumptions for each grade level.

Kindergarten	Counting
Grade 1	Adding & Subtracting 1 digit numbers
Grade 2	Adding & Subtracting 1 & 2 digit numbers w/borrowing or regrouping
Grade 3	One digit Multiplication
Grade 4	One & two digit multiplication, begin easy dividing
Grade 5	Decimals in multiplication and equivalent fractions
Grade 6	Multiply & divide with decimals, add subtract, multiply & divide fractions with common denominators, computer spreadsheet applications

**Iditarod Trail:** This Physical Education activity focuses on team oriented tasks. Physical Educators can select from 16 tasks to create either indoor or outdoor checkpoint activities. The scale of this event can be as large or small as resources, time and energy permit. On a grand scale, the event would be outside around a track or football field with 8 checkpoints. Teams of students could all begin at checkpoint #1 in 5 minute intervals with a required rest/snack to equalize time or teams could begin shotgun style from each checkpoint and have their rest/snack at the conclusion. Adult volunteers could man each checkpoint as checkers. On a smaller less demanding scale, the event could be held in the gym as relay activities. The sixteen suggested activities could provide for multiple days of Iditarod fun.

**Eight Traits of Iditarod:** The 4<sup>th</sup> trait of Iditarod is "T" for Teamwork. It could have been "trustworthy" or "truthful" but being a coach pushed me to select "teamwork." In the case of Iditarod, teamwork can be defined as a group of people and/or animals working together to achieve a common desired goal. There are so many aspects of Iditarod that exemplify teamwork, it's difficult to select just one. The veterinarians work as a team to assure the health of the canine athletes. The Iditarod Air Force works as a team to deliver supplies to each checkpoint and to transport race officials, vets, dogs, mushers, etc between checkpoints. Anchorage municipal workers work as a team to cover 4<sup>th</sup> Street with snow for the ceremonial start of Iditarod. Volunteers work in a multitude of roles to assure smooth operation of the race. Participating as a volunteer for the start and restart of the 2005 Iditarod gave me an opportunity to witness the monumental teamwork that goes into the organization and execution of The Last Great Race.

In her rookie Iditarod Sue Allen had to drop her 3 lead dogs early in the race. Sue found herself in a serious predicament not having the leaders her team depended on for the journey to Nome. Sue tried 12 of her 13 remaining dogs in lead, but none of the dogs stepped up to be a leader for the team. Without a leader, Sue thought she was going to have to scratch but as a last resort she tried the one remaining dog, Gopher. Sue describes Gopher as a dog that had never had an original thought in his entire life. But as is often the case, a leader comes forth in unexpected ways. The dogs came together as a team with Gopher in lead and traveled the remaining distance to Nome as a unified group with perseverance, enthusiasm and a winning attitude. You can read Sue's journal from Iditarod 2004 at the No Snow Kennel's website - [www.nosnowkennels.com](http://www.nosnowkennels.com).



The athletes of North High School, where I teach, have created their own athletic creed that focuses on the importance of TEAM. Their creed emphasizes that **Together Everyone Achieves More. As I read their creed, I can imagine that canine athletes work for, believe in and trust their teammates in much the same way. Bosca is a two year old from Just Guts Kennel in Eau Claire, WI. Look into his eyes. He is committed to persevering. He is a winner both in or out of harness. He knows that there is no "I" in TEAM.**

### *Eau Claire North Athletic Creed*

*As athletes at North High, we will work hard as individuals in order to come together as a unified team. We vow to help our fellow athletes, as well as ourselves, reach our full potential.*

*We will strive for excellence in athletics as well as in the classroom. We will always do our best and we will never be satisfied with what we've already accomplished.*

*We will never fall down nor back down from any obstacle in our paths. We will stay focused on our goals at all times. We will see barriers as hurdles, obstacles as opportunities and problems as solutions.*

*We promise to always make the right decisions and to find a way to overcome struggles that may occur in our lives.*

*As a team, we will have one heartbeat, we will trust each other to do our best and we will be winners in athletics as well as in life. We will persevere on and off the playing surface.*

*Together we will make the impossible possible. We will all be the leaders of the pack. We will portray the North High Huskies with class and pride. On a scale of 1 - 10, we will be elevens!*

