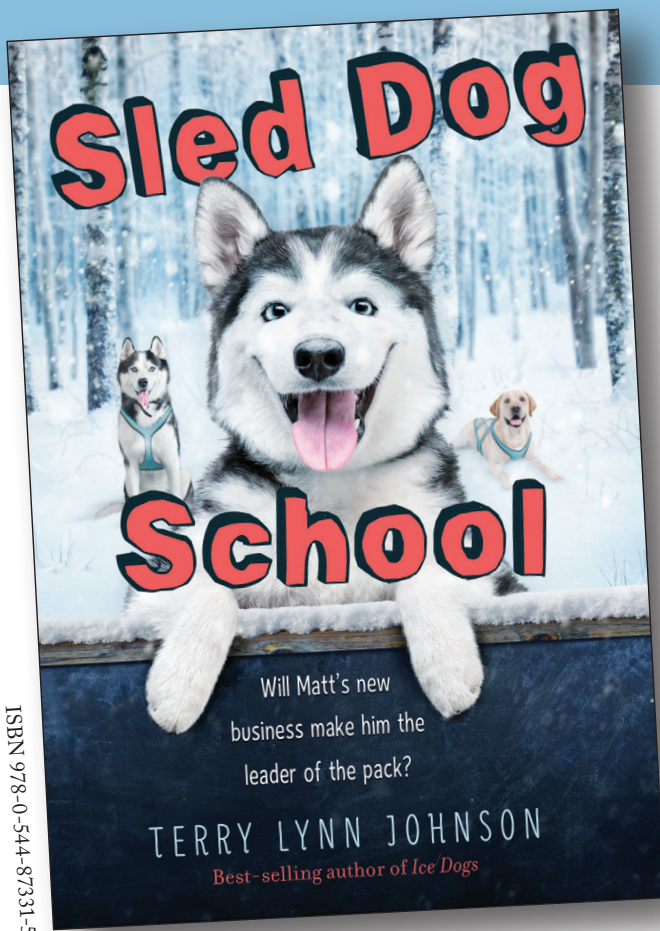


CURRICULUM GUIDE



Sled Dog School

By **Terry Lynn Johnson**

A Junior Library Guild Selection

Eleven-year-old **Matthew Misco** just wants to fly under the radar. Things are hard enough at school with kids making fun of him for his parents' off-the-grid lifestyle, but life gets much worse when he's assigned a long-term math project: to start his own business. He has to ace this assignment to save his failing math grade. But what is he even good at? The only thing he truly loves doing is running his team of dogs. Could he turn that love into a viable business?

Running Matt's Sled Dog School is a challenge—finding kids willing to pay to learn mushing, figuring out how to teach the skills that are second nature to an experienced musher like Matt, and keeping everyone safe. But through the process Matt discovers strengths he didn't know he had—and makes two really good friends.

Experienced musher and author Terry Lynn Johnson brings her passion for sledding to young readers in this exciting, heartwarming novel filled with the joy of dogs.















“Themes of friendship and problem-solving are slipped effortlessly into the funny and fresh plot, and authentic off-the-grid details bring the story to life. . . . A tale of loyalty and friendship—with a strong dose of validation for readers who learn from doing rather than books—that hits all the right notes.”








—*Kirkus Reviews*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Unless otherwise noted, discussion questions are aligned with the following Common Core State Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1](#)

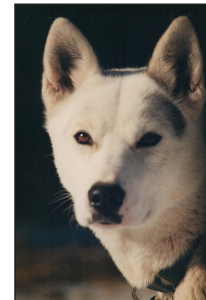
-  The story opens with Matt on a sled pulled by his team of dogs rushing to reach the mailbox before his mother comes home. What obstacles does he face in getting to the mailbox on time?
-  What is in the mailbox that Matt doesn't want his parents to see? What is their reaction once they discover what he's trying to hide?
-  Matt's math teacher, Mr. Moffat, offers an extra credit assignment to his students. What is the assignment and how does Matt decide he is going to approach earning extra credit in math?
-  School is not easy for Matt. What does Mr. Moffat offer to help Matt to succeed in the subject? Why do you think that Matt doesn't want to take his math teacher's offer?
-  Matt's family has adopted a different lifestyle than his classmates at school. How is Matt's family life different from families with modern conveniences?
-  Matt is thrilled to have his first student at his dog sled school. How does the first meeting with Tubbs, Matt's new student, go?
-  Matt's real reason for creating a dog sled training business is to help him pass his math class. What is Tubbs' real reason for signing up for Matt's Sled Dog School?
-  Matt is so excited to take the dogs out for a run that he rushes through the directions for Tubbs. What happens to Tubbs as a result of not receiving enough instruction about dog sledding?
-  Tubbs holds up his end of the bargain and manages to get another student for Matt's dog sled school. Describe the new client.
-  Mr. Moffat has his students make periodic presentations detailing the ups and downs of their businesses. How does the success of Matt's Sled Dog School compare to the businesses created by his classmates Jacob and Tammy?
-  Matt thinks his student Alex is a "know-it-all." What events in the story support Matt's opinion of Alex?
-  Matt has Alex run a large team of dogs while he and Tubbs are in the sled. As they are resting at the base camp, Bandit appears with an empty sled. What does Matt think has happened? What do the three kids do to try to solve the problem?
-  How is Alex's relationship with her older sister, Samantha, like the relationship between Matt and his younger sister, Lily?
-  Alex, Matt, and Tubbs arrive late to Matt's house after a lesson. The kids' parents are worried and angry, and Alex's mom threatens to pull Alex out of the sled dog school. What happens when Alex returns with her mother and a camera crew to Matt's house for a lesson?

-  Matt's classmate Tammy has made several polished presentations about her successful lip gloss business to the class. How is Tammy's final presentation different from her previous ones? What is Mr. Moffat's reaction to Tammy's last presentation?
-  After Alex's mother's piece about Matt's dog sled school airs on TV, Matt gets an unexpected client interested in lessons. Who is Matt's new student? Why does he want to take lessons? How does the new student's first class at the sled dog school go?
-  How does Matt reward his students at the end of their lessons at Matt's Sled Dog School?
-  Tubbs shows up unexpectedly at Matt's house one morning before school. Why does Tubbs call himself a "drive-by delivery hero?" Who ends up being Matt's third student at sled dog school?
-  How is Mrs. Wilson, the school bus driver, helpful to Matt with his small business project and with understanding the behavior of his classmates?
-  Matt makes some important realizations about himself during the class presentation from the owners of MotorHeads, a local motorcycle shop. What does he realize about his struggle with math and how he might be more successful at understanding it?
-  How does Matt change from the beginning to the end of the story? What lessons do you think he learns through the creation and running of his sled dog school?

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2](#)



Author **TERRY LYNN JOHNSON** began her mushing journey as a dog handler and worked for several different mushers assisting at races and taking clients on dogsled expeditions. When she was ready for her own dogs, she started with a small kennel of five Alaskan huskies; within a few years, she had eighteen dogs. Her previous book with a sledding theme, *Ice Dogs*, was an ABA Best Children's Book of 2014. When she became a conservation officer with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, she had to give up her team and now channels her love of running dogs into her writing. See pictures of Terry's dogs and learn more about her life and books at terrylynnjohnson.com



ORBIT

The discussion questions and activities in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both masters' and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

ACTIVITIES

Off the Grid

Matt’s family has decided to live a lifestyle that allows them to live close to nature and off the grid of modern conveniences such as electricity and running water. Imagine that you and your family adopted a similar lifestyle. What would you do for entertainment and to stay connected as a family? Make a list of activities that you could do alone or with your family that wouldn’t require electricity.

Words to Live By

Matt’s father offers advice about life in the form of pithy sayings:

“Do what you love. Love what you do.”

“No matter how much you know, somewhere, someone is going to be better than you.”

“Good judgement comes from experience, and experience comes from poor judgement.”

“Sometimes it’s more important to be kind to people than to be better.”

Choose one saying and write a persuasive paragraph focusing on how this piece of advice is important. Give clear reasons and examples to support your opinion.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1](#)

Everyday Math

Matt struggles to understand math and feels like he’s no good at it. Matt isn’t aware that his everyday care of the sled dogs involves math—from dividing the chicken into equal parts to measuring and cutting new lines for the dog sleds. You, too, may not realize how much math is imbedded into your everyday life. Create a chart of your day divided into blocks of time. List the activity that you do in each time block and note what type of math may be involved in each activity.

Calling All Mushers!

Matt’s Sled Dog School grows from a math extra-credit project into a real business by the end of the story. Design a brochure for Matt’s Sled Dog School that would help him to generate customers. Include a description of what the lessons would be, the cost per lesson, and positive reviews from Matt’s students.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2](#)

Doggie Wisdom

Matt has a poster in his room that contains the following words:

ADVICE FROM A SLED DOG:

Work as a team

Keep moving forward

Howl with your friends

Be warm-hearted

Love what you do

Create your own version of this poster and decorate it with images cut from magazines and/or your own drawings and embellishments.

MY BUSINESS PLAN

Matt’s math teacher, Mr. Moffat, presented a long-term project to his class that required each student to create a small business plan, and to implement the plan to measure costs and profit. Now it’s your turn to try your hand at being an entrepreneur! What will your business be? What are you passionate about? Do you enjoy babysitting? Interesting in starting a dog walking business? What skills do you have (knitting, baking, throwing a football) that you can turn into your own business?

Every small business starts with a business plan to guide business decisions and to avoid mistakes. Can your interests be turned into a product or service? Complete the following worksheets to design your small business plan.

Questions 1-6: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2](#)

Questions 7-9: [CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.5.NBT.B.6](#); [CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.6.NS.B.2](#)

Question 10: [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.1](#)

1. What is your big idea? (product or service) _____

2. What makes your idea unique? (What do existing products/services not offer that yours will?)

3. Who will be your customers? (Will they be children, teens or adults? What do they like and dislike? Try to describe your customer with as much detail as possible.) _____

4. Where will you sell your product or service? _____

5. What will you call your business? _____

6. How much will it cost to start your business? Make a list of start-up costs such as materials and equipment to determine how much money you will need before you launch your small business.

7. What is the cost of making each unit of your product or providing each hour of service? List each expense and divide your expenses by the number of products you will make or number of hours that you will provide a service. Use these formulas to help you:

Product: Cost per product = total expenses divided by the number of products that can be made

Service: Cost per hour of service = total expenses divided by number of hours worked

8. How much will you charge per product or hour of service? (Make sure that you set your price above the cost of each unit.)

9. What will be your profit? Use this formula to calculate the profit:

Sale price of product/service - cost of product/service = profit

10. On a separate piece of paper, design an advertisement (flier, brochure, newspaper ad, or website home page) for your business. Include the business name and a description of the product or service you offer, the price, and contact information. Will you include a catchy slogan? A logo or illustration?