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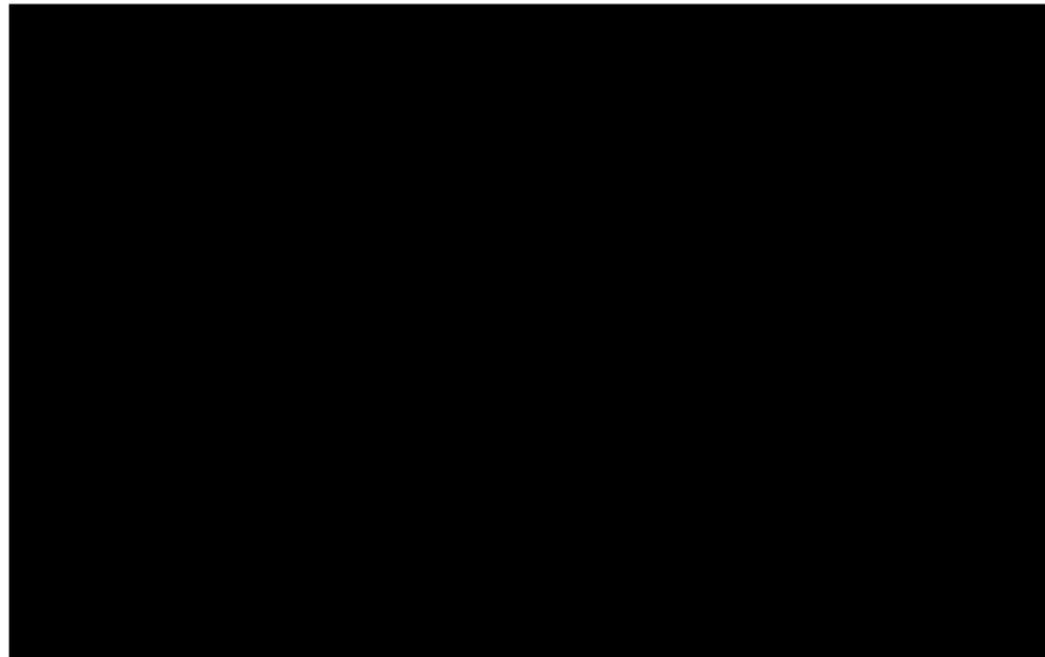
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ALLSTON BRIGHTON

Boston teacher to run 155-mile marathon in Sahara Desert to raise money for new laptops for school

Posted by Matt Rocheleau November 12, 2012 04:29 PM

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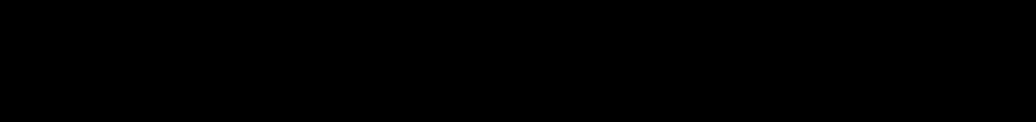
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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

A Boston Public School teacher hopes to raise \$50,000 for her school when she runs in a six-day, 155-mile marathon through the Sahara Desert in northern Africa in April.

Liz Byron, a 28-year-old learning specialist for the sixth grade at the Gardner Pilot Academy in Allston, has qualified for and plans to run the Marathon de Sables, school officials said.


The race course stretches the equivalent of six consecutive marathons through one of the largest, hottest deserts on earth. The marathon is considered one of the toughest foot races in the world.

Byron has raised about \$13,000 so far and plans to use the money to buy a classroom set of laptop computers for the school, which is [undergoing an expansion](#) from an elementary school to a K-8 school, which it is scheduled to become in the 2013-14 academic year.

“I’m running to support Gardner Pilot Academy because it’s an outstanding school with a remarkable staff and leadership who go above and beyond every day to give low-income urban kids an exemplary education,” said a statement from Byron. “As we expand to grade eight, I want to be sure every sixth grader has access to state-of-the-art classroom technology to prepare them for success in high school, college, and beyond.”

The Pennsylvania native who now lives in Allston has been teaching full-time for about four years, including the past two at the Gardner Pilot Academy, officials said. She also co-teaches a graduate-level course at the Lynch School of Education at Boston College.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and studio art in 2006 from BC, where she swam to multiple school records, including becoming Boston College’s first ever swimming Academic All-American. She earned master’s degrees from the Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education and Lesley University.



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Byron has competed in other endurance challenges, including six marathons, an ironman triathlon, and several other running, biking, and swimming events, officials said.

She will be about one of an estimated 800 runners who will compete in the race that starts in early April in Morocco, according to the school. Most runners hail from Europe and Africa; about 50 to 60 runners are Americans.

Participants must carry all personal belongings, food and other supplies in backpacks during the race that includes sand dunes and rocky terrain. Event organizers only provide water and tents.

Byron will pay for her own travel and registration costs, school officials said. The money she raises will go directly toward new laptops for the school. Tax-deductible donations to her campaign can be made at www.runforlaptops.org.

“Liz Byron embodies what Gardner Pilot Academy is all about,” principal Erica Herman said in a statement. “She is incredibly dedicated, innovative, and tireless on behalf of our students and families. Her willingness to undertake this tremendous endurance challenge speaks volumes about both her physical strength and the strength of her character. All of us at GPA are rooting for Liz every step of the way.”

For more information about the school, visit www.gardnerpilotacademy.org.

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