

*We are grateful to Tammy Payne, a social studies teacher at Leonardtown Middle School in Leonardtown, Maryland for sharing her excitement about Freedom's Feast as a learning tool. Tammy began using Freedom's Feast with her students in the fall of 2003. This is her lesson plan for introducing Freedom's Feast as an interactive experience to her students and their families before Thanksgiving. She is delighted to know that other educators may find it helpful.*

## Freedom's Feast Lesson Plan

### Warm-ups:

- What does your family do on Thanksgiving Day?
- Does Thanksgiving have anything to do with the Indians?
- What comes to mind when you think of Thanksgiving?
- How does your family celebrate Thanksgiving?
- Now that we have studied Thanksgiving dinner in class, what changes might you try in how your family celebrates Thanksgiving?
- What did you do differently on Thanksgiving with your family? What did you try? Did it work?

Use warm-ups to introduce Thanksgiving. Remember - not everyone celebrates - be sure to include those that don't in your class discussions. Ask them why they don't celebrate - be open to their answers and remind class to be the same.

1. Give Pre-test on Thanksgiving knowledge
2. Go over pre-test with the class for other/possible responses - encourage religious tolerance and mutual respect
3. Explain what we are going to try to do in class.
  - Learn about the real meaning of Thanksgiving
  - Learn more about our country's history
  - Share ideas
  - Share a feast as a group
  - Try it at home
  - Finally, report back to group
3. Hand out booklets (class set)
4. Highlight the interesting things in the books

- a. Share personal insight about the booklet and apply it to your life (use memories from your childhood) - you might be surprised how many parents do not share their childhood with their children
  - b. Talk to the students about asking their family members why they celebrate or not the holiday the way they do.
  - c. TURN on the MUSIC! Very successful. The songs are in the back of the book. All you have to do is find a CD of the music. I purchased "Celebrate America" from Twin Sisters Production. We listened to the music, and then we tried to sing with the music. The kids got a kick out of this. I had them go home and see if their parents knew any of the songs we had sung in class.
5. Practice makes perfect! With that thought, I had the students choose which reading they wanted to follow. We then counted the number of parts for that reading, counted off the numbers in class. If we had enough for 3 turns, that is what we took. Everyone had the chance to try to read out loud. I was worried about the low readers or non-readers; however, the students took those readers under their wing and helped them with the words. It was magical to see this occur.
6. For the evening event, I chose a class and had them stay after school and practice the scenario. We wrote about the experience and discussed it the next day. They felt that the evening went way too long. They felt that they got more out of the classroom experience than the evening meeting.

About 2 weeks prior to the event, I sent a letter home explaining that the class would be having a full Thanksgiving Dinner in class. Whatever they would like to bring, I would gladly accept. As they responded that they would bring food, I made suggestions back for what I needed covered. I personally made 400 biscuits and 10 boxes of stuffing. I purchased napkins and plates (200 of each). Water was the only drink served in the classroom. This avoided the mess issue and stains.

### Classroom setup:

1. I arranged the desk in 2 long rows with desks facing each other. It made the look of a very long dining room table.
2. I had the custodian leave a vacuum cleaner in my room for the day. We vacuumed between each class period.
3. As soon as each class was dismissed, we quickly set up a plate and a drink (already filled) for each student in the next class.
4. I cleared several large tables so that we could place the food on the table when it arrived. I had the children bring their food in the morning of the event. I had several parents bring warm dishes to my class throughout the day.
5. As students arrived, I played patriotic music and told them to sit wherever, they wanted. I asked them not to touch the food until we had "done our program".
6. On each desk, I placed a copy of the Freedom's Feast book for them to use during the dinner. I had everyone open to the correct page. I started by talking about the meaning of Thanksgiving. I asked them about their traditions (to refresh myself - incase I had no practicing students). Before we ate, I told them that I was thankful for having such wonderful students that would willingly participate in this program with me. I made a positive comment about each student. When I was done, I told them that they could eat. To my surprise, each student wanted to tell the class what they were thankful for.
7. Each student cleaned up their own desk after they were done. No mess on my part! (Next year, remember to ask for more trashcans!!!!!!)
8. At the end of the day, I donated the leftover food to the staff lounge. I used this moment to explain what had taken place in my room and left copies of the Freedom's Feast on the table.
9. After Thanksgiving break, we discussed what worked and what didn't work for their families. Most of the students felt that they would do this again with their families.
10. We ended this with a discussion of traditions - how they are made, why we follow them and if they would set new ones for their families.

Permission letter:

(Date)

Dear Parents,

I am very pleased to announce that my social studies classes are going to participate in a Thanksgiving event called Freedom's Feast. This event intends to put the "thanks" back in Thanksgiving.

I am looking for parents to help me out on the Monday (8<sup>th</sup> grade) or Tuesday (7<sup>th</sup> grade) before the Thanksgiving break by assisting in my classroom with this wonderful project. I am looking for food donations. We will be eating during each of my classes. I always provide about 500 dinner rolls and stuffing for all of the classes. Drinks are not needed because the students will only be drinking water during both days.

If you are willing to help, please complete the form below. Thank you for your support in this wonderful program. If you have questions, please let me know.

Tammy Payne  
(contact info)

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Please complete and return to me as soon as possible.

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Name of Student (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_ I am able to help in class with the Freedom's Feast project.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am willing to send in \_\_\_\_\_ as a food donation for the Freedom's Feast project.

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Date

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Parent/Guardian Signature