Benjamin Franklin and Civic Mindedness

Lesson Objectives
- Students will recognize the characteristics of American democracy
- Students will explain the relationship that exists between rights and the obligations of citizenship
- Students will understand the importance of civic-mindedness, civic literacy and volunteerism

State of California Content Standards
- Standard 12.1 Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of American democracy
- Standard 12.1.2 Students discuss the promise and perils of American democracy
- Standard 12.2 Students evaluate the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationship among them, and how they are secured
- Standard 12.2.4 Students will understand the obligations of civic mindedness
- Standard 12.2.5 Students will describe the reciprocity between rights and obligations and why enjoyment of one’s rights entails respect for the rights of others

Resources
- We the People The Citizen and the Constitution
- www.quotationspage.com/Benjamin_Franklin
- www.ushistory.org/franklin/quotes

Lesson Plan
- Teacher will begin class by playing loud music and asking the question: would playing this music loudly late at night in a residential neighborhood be appropriate? Under the first amendment would this be considered the exercise of free speech?
- Review with students the ideas of classical republicanism, civic virtue, moral education, and the natural rights philosophy (students may refer to chapter 3 of We the People)
- Project the following “no longer virtuous, no longer free; is a maxim as true with regards to private persons as a common-wealth (B. Franklin)
- Discuss maxim and introduce the contributions of Benjamin Franklin, including the idea that the published maxims were reflections of American ideals and reminders of how to live in a republic
- Discuss with students “where there is no law, there is no bread” (B. Franklin)
- In groups of four or five, students will interpret five Franklin maxims (handout 1)
and include how the maxim relates to republicanism, American democracy, civic mindedness

- Groups will present to class their interpretations and findings. While presentations are occurring students will record the differences in group interpretations

Check for understanding/closure

- Students will be assigned individually the task of creating a maxim that relates to civic virtue, republicanism, and/or American democracy. Maxim must be accompanied by an illustration that depicts the ideals of their maxim
(Handout #1) Maxims of Benjamin Franklin

1. Sell not virtue to purchase wealth, nor liberty to purchase power.

2. To bear other peoples afflictions, everyone has courage enough, and to spare.

3. A great empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges.

4. Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as public liberty without the freedom of speech.

5. Passion governs, and she never governs wisely.

6. Educate your children to self-control, to the habit of holding passion and prejudice and evil tendencies subject to an upright and reasoning will, and you will have done much to abolish misery from their future and crimes from society.

7. When people find they can vote themselves money, that will be the end of ye republic.