

Benjamin Franklin

A Wonder-Based Approach to Life and Learning

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**Benjamin Franklin's
educational insights and
investigative spirit deserve
renewed attention.**

During his long life, Benjamin Franklin enjoyed something close to rock star status in Europe and some quarters of the United States. In 1778, before the Revolutionary War was even over, admirers in France commissioned the famous artist Jean-Antoine Houdon — sculptor of such public icons as King Louis XVI, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Napoleon Bonaparte — to cast a bust of Franklin to be displayed in the public halls of Versailles. The French statesman Turgot wrote the epigram in Latin below the bust, “He snatched the lightning from the sky and the scepter from tyrants” (Van Doren 1956, 606). In many minds, Franklin was like a god. After his death and the publication of his *Autobiography* (Franklin 2001/1791), his notoriety grew even stronger. When Davy Crockett died at the Alamo in 1836, almost 50 years after Franklin's death, the book he had in his pocket was not the Bible, but a copy of Franklin's *Autobiography* (Isaacson 2003, 479).

Why was Benjamin Franklin so popular? Factors surely include his many accomplishments and his intelligence, wit, and skills in business, politics, and diplomacy. But another and often overlooked reason is the infectious sense of wonder and curiosity that Benjamin Franklin brought to nearly everything he did. Ever since the 18th century, parents and teachers the world over have recognized something of high value in Benjamin Franklin's approach to life and learning and have held him up as a model for their children. In 2007, over one million visitors — 248,000 of them school children — flocked to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia to learn about Franklin's life and see his many works, inventions, and discoveries (Franklin Institute Board of Trustees 2007). Benjamin Franklin continues to excite and inspire.



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From his earliest childhood until the very last days of his life at 80, Franklin saw the world as wide open, full of fascinating questions to answer and discoveries to unearth. He had a real belief that his own investigations could advance the course of scientific and philosophical knowledge. This approach enabled Franklin to make fascinating discoveries and inventions. For example, he discovered some of the major properties of electricity, which led to the first lightning rod and the first battery for the storage of energy. He invented bifocals, the first American catheter, the glass harmonica, the open stove (or "Franklin Stove"), and many more fascinating and still-useful objects.

When one reads through Franklin's scientific journals (e.g., Cohen 1941; Franklin 1818) and his many letters (Franklin 1821), one is struck by the childlike energy and curiosity that consistently runs from the earliest years of his teens to his experiments with bifocals just before he died at 80.

Consider one example from Franklin's journal from 1726, when he was just twenty. He was returning from a trip to England where he was in search of funding for a business venture. While other men played cards or drank their nights away, Franklin walked about the ship each day with his notebook, pen, and viewing glasses, making careful observations about the sun, moon, stars, the tides, and marine life. Here is an entry from a morning when he observed a strange crab upon a branch which really sparked his curiosity,

Observing the weed more narrowly, I spied a very small crab crawling among it, about as big as the head of a ten-penny nail, and of a yellowish colour, like the weed itself. This gave me some reason to think that he was a native of the branch, that he had not long since been in the same condition with the rest of those little embryos that appeared in the shells, this being the method of their generation; and that consequently all the rest of this odd kind of fruit might be crabs in due time. To strengthen my conjecture, I have resolved to keep the weed in salt water, renewing it every day till we come on shore, by this experiment to see whether any more crabs will be produced or not in this manner (Franklin 1818, xv).

Franklin observed this plant each subsequent day and carefully recorded his observations to see if he might figure out the manner of generation of this strange and fascinating creature.

Franklin is exhibiting the same kind of curiosity and investigative spirit we try to instill in our children in school. The difference is that Franklin is a grown man. No one is telling him to do this exercise for a grade in a class; he is doing it all on his own. For all he knew, there may have been a book published somewhere on the nature of this little crab, but Franklin resolved to conduct the investigation himself rather than wait to "look it up" in a book when he returned home. Franklin once wrote that "a house is not a home unless it contains food and fire for the mind as well as the body" (Faal 2006, 451). To be happy and healthy, Franklin believed that one needed each day to offer the mind that which would both nourish and inspire.

Many who live in our more advanced scientific age have the sense that whatever isn't already known will be discovered by "experts." They feel that their role in any process of discovery is to passively read about it in magazines and books.

This modern mentality is conveyed to children by adults and can gradually exert a corrosive effect on their attitude toward learning, teachers, and school. For example, child researchers in Great Britain and the United States have pointed to a loss of interest in school beginning as early as the middle of 1st grade and culminating in 5th grade (Stone 1981, 407). Many parents have heard the familiar refrain, "I don't want to go to school" or "I hate school!" My own son began to express this attitude toward school shortly after beginning kindergarten, when he was just five years old. A substantial number of elementary school children demonstrate shyness, embarrassment, and feelings of inferiority about anything even associated with school (Hay & Nye 1998; Matthews 1994).

These negative attitudes contrast with the curiosity, wonder, and mystery that characterize the toddler and early childhood years. Something vital about us has been lost or taken away by about the 5th grade, if not earlier. Franklin in contrast managed to keep a childlike spirit of curiosity and investigation alive well into his adulthood. In the pages that fol-

low, I will attempt to show just how he managed to accomplish this and how parents and teachers of today might make use of this approach in their own work with children.

Franklin's Self-Education

Franklin had just two years of formal schooling and was mostly self-educated. His parents hoped he would train for the ministry, but it quickly became clear to them and his teachers that the young Franklin had no interest in or talent for the pulpit. He asked too many questions, needed too much evidence, and had too much interest in practical matters to succeed as a member of the clergy. So his father pulled him out of school entirely and put him on a course to become a manual laborer like himself. Franklin could have proceeded to live a very practical life of work from this point, but he did not. For him, the mind needs both food and fire. He balanced his many practical interests and pursuits with intellectual and spiritual ones. How did he do it?

Mastery of Writing

The young Franklin decided early in his life that one of the basic keys to happiness comes through reading, writing, and thinking. Franklin became determined to learn all he could from the best works and the best minds he could find. So beginning at about the age of ten, shortly after being removed from school, Franklin set for himself the task of carefully reading pieces of writing that he thought were good, persuasive, carefully reasoned, and well-constructed. His favorite books were John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the *Dialogues* of Plato, Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Daniel Defoe's *Essay on Projects*, and the ethical essays of Cotton Mather. He would carefully read and then copy these works, paying careful attention to their style of writing. While copying, Franklin would try to note the sentiment behind each sentence. He would then put the book down for a few days. When he returned to it, he would try, without looking, to rewrite the entire book by expressing each "hinted sentiment" he had noted previously. He would then compare what he had written with the original text in order to discover and correct any mistakes he had made. Franklin writes of this method,

By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and corrected them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that in certain particulars of small import I had been lucky enough to improve the method or language [of the original], and this encouraged me to think that I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious (Franklin 2001, 29).

Franklin would even submit his pieces of writing on various important topics of the day to his brother's newspaper under pseudonyms, since his brother refused to publish the work of a lowly child apprentice. Many were published on the front page of the paper and made quite a splash. Through these and many other attempts to improve his reading, writing, and thinking, Franklin notes that he inadvertently came to meet with the "Trivium" or the three classic liberal arts of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. He was determined to make the liberal arts the center of his self-educational endeavors and to master each one by imitation and internalization. Later in his life, Franklin (2001, 27) notes that this early self-training in the liberal arts was "the principal means of my advancement" in life.

The Socratic Method

In addition to the liberal arts, Franklin says that his program of self-instruction caused him to embrace the method of Socrates. This Socratic or "dialectical" method forms the basis of all of his subsequent scientific and philosophical investigations.

The most important part of Socrates' dialectical method is wonder. It all begins with a question, with something we are curious and care about. A real investigation cannot proceed unless we are first willing to admit to ourselves and to others that we do not know something: "I wonder...." This ability to wonder out loud is at the center of the famous Oracle of Delphi which declared that Socrates is the wisest of all people because he alone knows that he is not wise. The oracle is not claiming that Socrates is not intelligent or that he does not have many ideas about things, but that he is willing to admit to himself and others that he really doesn't know the most important things in life with any certainty. Further, Socrates is "wise" because he knows that nobody else

knows these things with any certainty either. Instead we are to philosophize, literally to “love wisdom” by working together to move ourselves closer to a knowledge we will never fully attain. At the end of his life, Franklin notes that he emulated Socrates’ attitude of humility throughout his entire life.

In Socrates’ method, wonder leads to a specific question. Socratic questions are concerned with conceptual matters rather than empirical ones, e.g., “What is courage?” “What is beauty?” This initial question will guide the subsequent investigation. It helps us to be clear about just what we are talking about and reminds us that we are mutually attempting to figure something out, not debating, battling, or trying to verbally defeat each other.

The next step is to think the question through by proposing a tentative answer or definition to see if it withstands objections or counter-examples. If it fails, one must revise it and try again. In a similar way, Franklin, like a good scientist, saw his hypotheses as open to contradictory evidence and subject to revision.

Character and Virtue

Another focus of Franklin’s self-education was the search for worthy values. After a great deal of soul-searching about his values and religious beliefs in his early years, Benjamin Franklin chose to devote his spiritual energies not to any one faith or creed, but to what he saw as common to all religions: the cultivation of virtue and the development of character. He writes of this childhood insight in his *Autobiography* when he realized that it was in “everyone’s interest to be virtuous who wished to be happy even in this world” (Franklin 2001, 103). Franklin became a serious student of character and virtue from this moment on.

Just what does Franklin mean by character and virtue? In understanding these two terms, it is helpful to imagine the human person as a diamond ring. The diamond itself is our “mind” or “personality,” the center of who we are. It is the part of us that thinks, feels, wants, hopes, remembers, and acts. Character is the setting that holds the diamond in place. We don’t typically look at or think about the setting of a ring when it is in good shape, because the diamond is much more attractive. But we definitely notice the setting if it is flawed and doesn’t hold the

precious stone in place. Character performs a similarly hidden and vital function for the human personality.

Technically speaking, character is the set of inner habits and tendencies that unconsciously influence our minds to think, feel, want, hope, remember, and act in certain ways (Aristotle 1962, 8). If I have a stable character, it inclines me to think good thoughts, have healthy feelings, want the right things, to be optimistic, live in the present tense, and chose the right course of action for the circumstances I am in. But if I have a weak character, I am inclined to think bad thoughts, have unhealthy feelings, to want things that are bad for me, to be pessimistic about the future, preoccupied with the past, and to choose the wrong course of action in my circumstances.

Think of something like an addiction as an extreme example of a deficiency in character. The addiction is not some isolated problem, but a crack in the very foundation of the personality that affects everything that the addict thinks about, feels, wants, remembers, and how he acts. The addict’s thoughts, feelings, desires, memories and actions will be completely different from a person without this same character deficiency. Franklin came to believe that if we want to change the way our minds work (how we feel, what we want, our memories, and actions), we need to change the underlying character structure upon which our minds rest.

Franklin argued from his own life experience that the way to obtain happiness and peace of mind in this life is to “educate” or improve one’s character and virtue. But Franklin discovered that this type of education is not theoretical but deeply practical. He found that he needed a much more concrete method for this type of education than any of the moral or religious leaders of his day were providing. So he decided to develop “the means and the manner of obtaining virtue” himself (Franklin 2001, 102).

From his study of the world’s major philosophies and religions, Franklin (2001, 94-95) identified the 13 central or “cardinal” virtues of human character.

- Temperance. Eat not to Dulness. Drink not to Elevation.
- Silence. Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself. Avoid trifling Conversation.

- Order. Let all your Things have their Places. Let each Part of your Business have its Time.
- Resolution. Resolve to perform what you ought. Perform without fail what you resolve.
- Frugality. Make no Expense but to do good to others or yourself: i.e. Waste nothing.
- Industry. Lose no Time. Be always employed in something useful. Cut off all unnecessary Actions.
- Sincerity. Use no hurtful Deceit. Think innocently and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.
- Justice. Wrong none, by doing Injuries or omitting the Benefits that are your Duty.
- Moderation. Avoid Extremes. Forbear resenting Injuries so much as you think they deserve.
- Cleanliness. Tolerate no Uncleaness in Body, Cloaths or Habitation.
- Tranquility. Be not disturbed at Trifles, or at Accidents common or unavoidable.
- Chastity. Rarely use Venerly but for Health or Offspring; Never to Dulness, Weakness, or the Injury of your own or another's Peace or Reputation.
- Humility. Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

Franklin quickly recognized that he could find at least one "vice" or flaw in himself for each of these thirteen virtues. He wrote down each vice and the circumstances under which he tended to engage in it. He then brainstormed and devised a concrete plan to correct each vice. He resolved to implement each of these plans so he could develop the 13 virtues to their perfection. But he quickly became overwhelmed by trying to improve each of his many shortcomings. He felt discouraged and began to lose his enthusiasm for the entire character education project. Then he had an insight: Instead of trying to tackle all of his vices at once, he decided to focus on the development of one virtue at a time and then to make small but tangible progress with it. He writes,

I judged it would be well not to distract my attention by attempting the whole at once but to fix it on one of them at a time, and when I should be master of that, then to proceed to another. (Franklin 2001, 95)

After identifying the core set of 13 virtues and deciding to focus on one at a time, Franklin uses a notebook to make chart with the virtues as the rows and the days of the week as the columns. Franklin would spend a week at a time focusing on a particular virtue, say "Temperance." If for any reason over the course of the day he failed to embody temperance — say he overate at lunch — he would write a black check next to the day concerned. Over time, he had a visible layout of how he was doing with each virtue. Franklin would dedicate himself to working very hard to keep that week free of black spots or at least to reduce the number of black spots over the course of the week. He would continue this virtue-a-week course for 13 weeks and then return to the beginning of the list on the 14th week. Thus, his program involved four 13-week courses per year. He would save all his records so that he could later evaluate his progress or lack thereof.

Every month or so, Franklin reviewed his charts and brainstormed about possible solutions to the character defects that that tended to show up on a regular basis. He then resolved to implement at least one of these changes each month and then monitor his progress. One example concerned his tendency to express his point in too extreme a manner. Franklin decided to make some concrete changes by altering his speaking style, forbidding himself to use any words or expressions that conveyed a fixed opinion like "certainly," and "undoubtedly." Instead he would say things like "I conceive," "I imagine," or "It appears to me at present," which conveyed more tentativeness and openness to the other person's view. Franklin notes that at first these changes felt very unnatural to him, but that after some time and practice, they became "so easy and so habitual to me that perhaps for these fifty years past no one has ever heard a dogmatic expression escape me" (Franklin 2001, 104). The historical record of other people's impressions of Franklin bears this out.

A Blueprint for Formal Education

Later in his life, Franklin tried to formalize the insights from his self-education into a plan for a publically funded school for children and youth that he called “The Pennsylvania Academy” (Franklin 2001, 207). At the time, proposing a public system of education was quite radical. But in 1749, Franklin wrote up his blueprint for the construction of the ideal public school.

The analogy of a greenhouse best describes Franklin’s approach to formal education. He writes, “And if Men may, and frequently do, catch such a Taste for cultivating Flowers, for Planting, Grafting, Inoculating, and the like, as to despise all other Amusements for their Sake, why may not we expect they should acquire a Relish for that *more useful* Culture of young Minds” (Franklin 2001, 209). He saw students as the plants in the greenhouse. Like plants, they have their own inner urge to grow and learn. Rather than looking at education as a downloading of information presented to students from the outside, Franklin believed the educational process must be built upon and by guided by students’ intrinsic curiosity and inner drive to grow, learn, and realize their moral and intellectual potential. At the same time, while the student’s innate wonder and curiosity drive the process of education, the student does not possess the resources or inner disciplines for learning to occur on its own. As Franklin learned from his experiences appropriating the works of great writers and thinkers, learning requires that a student’s curiosity be yoked to great models and the routine practice of structured activities. Education requires a careful mixture of student-driven curiosity and teacher-driven exercises and discipline.

Character Education

At the most basic level, Franklin believed that the focus of the curriculum should be directed toward the cultivation of virtue and the development of character. To return to the diamond ring analogy, if a school could help the student cultivate virtue and character, he or she would have a stable anchor to facilitate intellectual development not only during the time of school, but for the rest of life. Franklin’s method of character education is focused on the development of his 13 cardinal virtues.

Rather than directly lecture about virtue as a topic of class, as many schools do in character education programs today, Franklin argued instead that formal educational efforts should be directed toward creating conditions under which students would be encouraged to cultivate these 13 virtues. For example, Franklin proposed that students live together in modest, plain quarters and eat together “temperately and frugally” thereby learning frugality, order, moderation, and temperance. To learn resolution and industry, students are to frequently exercise with running, jumping, wrestling, swimming, and other activities. So as to keep an open and curiosity-filled spirit in the school, Franklin argued that the “Method of Instruction” (Franklin 2001, 210) in the classroom should be primarily Socratic rather than didactic. Franklin believed that this arrangement would encourage the development of sincerity, industry, and humility. In addition, the Socratic classroom would help form “democratic character” in students. Franklin did not believe that democratic practices come naturally to human beings. People must be educated and practice how to participate in the democratic order Franklin worked so tirelessly to create in America. In specific terms, democratic character would result when classrooms are structured in such a way that children can only succeed when they take responsibility for their own learning rather than look to the parent or the teacher to do all of their learning for them, and when they are encouraged to clearly state their views to others rather than being told what to think.

Liberal Arts

Given Franklin’s passion for and belief in reading, writing, speaking, and thinking, it should come as no surprise that next to character development, the liberal or “freeing” arts comprise a huge part of Franklin’s educational curriculum. Students are to learn, first and foremost, how to write clearly and persuasively by learning from the best instances of what has been thought and written. Students would practice their own writing by constantly summarizing what they read in great texts, discussing great texts with peers in seminars, and writing letters to each other explaining what particular texts are all about. Students are to learn how to read for deep understand-

ing by reading quickly, abstracting the meaning, sharing the meaning with others, and then having these efforts observed and corrected by their teacher. Franklin writes,

The *English Language* might be taught by Grammar; in which some of our best Writers, as *Tillotson, Addison, Pope, Algernon Sidney, Cato's Letters, &c.*, should be Classicks: the *Stiles* principally to be cultivated, being the *clear* and *concise*. Reading should also be taught and pronouncing, properly, distinctly, emphatically; not with an even Tone, which *under-does*, nor a theatrical, which *over-does* Nature. To form their Stile they should be put on Writing Letters to each other, making Abstracts of what they read; or writing the same Things in their own Words; telling or writing Stories lately read, in their own Expressions. All to be revis'd and corrected by the Tutor, who should give his Reasons, and explain the Force and Import of Words, &c. (Smyth 1905, 391).

Students are also to learn and practice how to reason logically to reach a conclusion, how to argue to defend a conclusion, and to persuade others to accept it. Franklin also proposes that students study other liberal arts such as history, oratory, government, geography, natural philosophy, science, ancient customs, and morality.

Social Justice

In Franklin's time in our nation's history, education was primarily a private affair that only the well-to-do could afford. Franklin was quite determined to see a society where all adults take an active role in the education of children and where every child — rich and poor, boy and girl — is seen as capable of being educated and would have the opportunity to do so at the public's expense.

In addition to serving the private good of intellectual, moral, and personal growth of each and every student, education, Franklin believed, must serve and foster the common good. Franklin was determined that his school not become an "ivory tower" like many of the elite private schools he saw in colonial society that narrowly focused on personal growth and development. Franklin wanted his

school to achieve a balance between the classical liberal arts and the "practical arts" of business, accounting, warfare, engineering, the breeding of animals and the planting, cultivating, grafting, and inoculating of plants. Franklin argued that the "great Aim and End of all Learning" is putting one's skills and abilities to use to "serve Mankind, one's Country, Friends and Family" (Franklin 2001, 214-15).

Lessons for Today

In this last section, I take the major elements of Franklin's educational proposals and draw out the parenting and educational implications that may still hold value for us today.

Wonder

Benjamin Franklin was a great believer in applying the method of science and Socrates in educational contexts. Applying this method as parents and teachers today means asking ourselves an important series of questions: What is my attitude toward knowledge and discovery in my life? Am I a curious person? Do I feel comfortable asking and answering questions? Do I feel it is worthwhile to explore questions that may have no definitive answer? What is my attitude toward learning and discovery when I am with children? To what extent do I exhibit a "do-you-know-what-I-know" attitude when I am with children?

Consider for a moment the alternative to the Socratic and scientific method. Instead of putting ourselves in the position of not knowing something and then asking questions about it, we would take an "I-know-it-all" position and not ask real questions. Instead of reaching out to the world with our own investigations and experiments to answer questions, when questions came up we would rush to a book, website, or magazine to find "the answer." Instead of thinking through and articulating the definitions and beliefs we hold dear, we would simply say, "I know what I know, so don't ask me to explain it or think it through."

Psychologists refer to individuals who approach questions in this non-Socratic way as "authoritarian personalities" (Adorno et al. 1950, 3). The concept of the authoritarian personality is considered so valid a personality type that it has been incorporated into

thousands of research studies. Here are some major characteristics of authoritarian personalities:

- They blindly follow authority and tend not to question things.
- They have a lack of self-esteem and tend to feel vulnerable. They join authoritarian organizations to feel esteem and security.
- They are harshly judgmental about others, particularly minority groups.
- Their thinking patterns are dogmatic, rigid, and stereotypic.
- They do not like to listen to others who have different opinions than they (Adorno et al. 1950, 228).

The authoritarian personality is the opposite of the Socratic personality. The Socratic mind is open to questions; the authoritarian's is closed. The Socratic mind seeks to gather evidence to answer questions; the authoritarian knows the answers already and doesn't need any evidence. The Socratic mind will change opinions when confronted with evidence; the authoritarian will rigidly hold previously formed opinions despite contradictory evidence. The Socratic mind holds conclusions tentatively; the authoritarian mind holds conclusions dogmatically. The Socratic mind likes to engage with different views; the authoritarian is threatened by difference. The Socratic mind is humble and moderate about how much humans can know; the authoritarian has disdain for ignorance, vulnerability, and weakness.

Unfortunately, many adults feel it is their responsibility to be the know-it-all in front of children. Our pedagogical interactions with children often have a "do-you-know-what-I-know" quality to them, e.g., "Do you know why the Pilgrims decided to do that?" "Do you know why it is called a 'republic'?" Children are often put into the position of having to guess at answers that are in *our* heads. As common as these types of questions are in educational settings, they really do not teach children anything of value and often have the unintended effect of stifling their curiosity. Far better to adopt the, "I don't know, let's find out" or "I don't know, what do you think?" or "I wonder..." approach to learning with children. Parents and teachers are well-served to wonder together

with children about the questions that matter to them and to convey a spirit of mutual inquiry, that together we are embarking on a journey together into the heart of a wondrous odyssey. When we do this, children will feel free to explore and engage rather than look to us to give them all the answers. Hopefully, this will help them keep their curiosity and investigative spirit alive through the school years and into adulthood.

A 'Liberal Arts' Institution

Franklin wanted students to learn a set of "arts," such as thinking logically, speaking persuasively, and writing clearly, that help them to become active, free citizens in a democracy. He found that parents and teachers are aided in this effort by establishing networks of association with each other in which they regularly assemble and share with each other which "arts" have been working and those that have not. Franklin himself formed such a group of about a dozen like-minded individuals which he called "The Junto." Franklin and these men would meet regularly to discuss best practices, read each other's compositions, and then talk about them.

For school children, Franklin believed that the "arts" of reasoning, writing, and so forth, are facilitated by the use of classical texts, the best that has been thought and said in the world. There is a wonderful contemporary adaptation of classical texts which can be used even with very young children called *Touchpebbles* (Zeiderman 2003). This program uses fables, poems, art, philosophy, mathematics, natural science, and literature from different cultures to wonder, raise basic questions and engage children in lively group discussions. As a result, children are encouraged to develop their reading skills, creatively problem-solve, overcome fears of reading and speaking in a group setting, actively listen to and disagree with their peers (see also Bauer & Wise 2004; Corbett & Connors 1998; Joseph & McGlinn 2002).

In Franklin's experience, intellectual growth is built on the foundation of physical and moral health in children. Thus, helping kids get adequate sleep, diet and exercise is the first place to start in our educational endeavors. Further, structuring classroom procedures and designing age-appropriate lessons

and activities intended to cultivate the cardinal virtues (self-control, fairness, prudence, courage) in children are also essential. Michele Borba's (2002) book, *Building Moral Intelligence*, provides some very practical contemporary ideas to use with elementary aged children to help them build character and cultivate virtue (see also Benninga 1991; Bryan 2006; DeRoche & Williams 2000; Kessler 2000; Kilpatrick 1993; Nucci 2008).

Serving the Common Good

For Franklin, education should not only make a difference in the individual lives of students, but it should also help create a better world (Franklin 2001, 208). Franklin was a key figure in the development of the public library system, free public elementary education, establishing grants to hospitals so that they could serve the poor free of charge, the use of property taxes for the construction of common streets and roads, the fire department, street lights, street cleaning, and the city neighborhood watch. He also wrote educational pieces in his *Poor Richard's Almanac* and other published pamphlets regarding home fire safety, the need for the inoculation against smallpox, proposals for the humane slaughtering of animals, and influential arguments for the freedom of slaves.

I believe today's schools can cultivate the intellectual and moral development of students and serve the cause of social justice at the same time (see also Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn 1998; Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez 2002; Marshall & Oliva 2009). These goals are not mutually exclusive. It is important to realize that for Franklin, serving social justice in education was not an add-on or another subject in school like many of the "character development" programs today, but the natural outgrowth of what takes place in the classroom. In this sense, schools and homes today need to have a clear definition of justice and an articulated mission of the various ways that the school will work to move the wider world toward a more just order. This could include, but is not limited to in- and out-of-school mentorship programs, environmental activities, civic education and engagement, parent education programs, literacy initiatives, and poverty relief.

For Franklin, an educated child has a strong moral foundation. He or she is fundamentally decent, car-

ing, honest, humble, curious, and courageous. In addition, an educated child is highly literate, capable of reading complex texts with great understanding, writing clearly about his or her thoughts, discussing complex ideas with others in a civil and open way, and persuading others with highly cultivated and persuasive public speaking abilities. The educated child knows how to put his or her knowledge to use in practical activities such as crafts, engineering, gardening, athletics, and business. And, above all, the child has an investigative spirit. Franklin's is an ambitious vision, but one that seems to hold much more promise one than the vision of today's educated child as someone who has mastered various discrete, superficial, easily forgotten, and often useless state-mandated "standards of learning."

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