

**KATE
FRANK**
1890-1982



**FOUNDED
OKLAHOMA
EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION**

Kate Frank's resume is impressive. She taught for 47 years and held leadership positions with the Muskogee and National Education Associations. Her firing by the Muskogee Board of Education brought support and funding from the National Education Association to fight her case, which she won on appeal.

Kate Frank was born in February 1890 in Missouri. Her parents were farmers so she practically educated herself. She began her teaching career in 1909 teaching eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse for a Missouri mining town, where she was also the janitor. To obtain her teaching certificate, she picked strawberries one summer to raise money since she was only paid \$30 a month as a teacher.

After moving to Oklahoma at the end of World War I, Frank was hired as one of the inaugural teachers for Muskogee's West Junior High to teach business education, which opened in 1920. She moved to Muskogee Central High School, where she taught for nearly forty years. She received a bachelor's degree from Southwest Teachers College in Springfield, Missouri in 1924, and later earned a master's degree from University of Missouri. She turned down multiple marriage proposals because of her dedication to her work and her school children.

In the 1930s, Frank served as president of the Muskogee Classroom Teachers Association. She helped organize the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA) in 1934 and served as its first female president two years later. As president, Frank began a series of studies to evaluate classroom organization, teacher pay, school revenues, and tenure, though the proposals weren't approved by the legislature.

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Frank was elected vice-president of the National Education Association (NEA) in 1942 and 1943. When she refused to support a political candidate and previous agitation for teacher pay guarantees, the Muskogee Board of Education fired her in 1943. She took the case to court, while NEA raised monies to pay her salary while suspended. She was reinstated in 1945 and the extra monies helped establish the Kate Frank Legal Services Program, a defense fund for teachers needing help in legal matters concerning their employment.

The veteran teacher retired in 1956, but continued her advocacy for senior citizens' rights, serving on the state Teacher's Retirement System Board of Trustees for ten years. In 1958, she secured funding and opened a nine-story, 96-apartment building in Muskogee as a residence for retired teachers. The apartments today are still open for senior-citizen occupancy.

Frank received multiple awards and recognition at the local, state, and national levels. The OEA annual award for service excellence is named in her honor. In 1972, Frank was the first honoree to receive the National Retired Teacher of the Year award, over fifty other state nominees, which she accepted from first lady Pat Nixon. She continued her work in support of retired educators and senior Americans until her death in April 1982 at age 92.

The following year she was inducted into the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame. The NEA administers the Kate Frank/DuShane Fund, which provides legal support for teacher rights and education issues in state and federal trial and appellate courts. When trailblazing educators are mentioned today, Frank's name is always near the top of the list.