

DR. MARTHA L. KING

“Education is a dynamic enterprise that is highly personal, continuously evolving, and forever in a state of becoming”

Dr. Martha L. King, Professor Emeritus of The Ohio State University College of Education, received the College’s most prestigious award during a ceremony in Columbus on November 6th, 1992. Dr. King was inducted into the College of Education Hall of Fame, which is the highest award that the College can bestow. Award winners, alumni or faculty of the college, must have made significant contribution to education as “models” for all others in the field. Dr. King’s induction recognized her influence on the entire field of language and literacies education.

Dr. King’s career in education began in 1938 as an elementary classroom teacher in Athens and Perry County Public Schools (Ohio). She received her Ph.D. and B.S. from the Ohio State University, and her M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University. She also did post doctorate work at the University of California at Berkeley. When she joined the Elementary Education faculty at Ohio state in 1959, she already had over 20 years experience as a teacher and supervisor in the public schools. In her stellar career, Dr. King provided leadership at the university level, was a supervisor and curriculum consultant for Franklin County (Ohio) Schools, and was a supervising-critic teacher at Ohio University.

Dr. King is well known for her many scholarly publications. Informal education, those classrooms with their thoughtful weave of theory visible to the trained eye, held the interest of both the researcher and the teacher in King. It can be argued that some of her most compelling pieces of writing were her descriptions of informal classrooms.

She was recognized as a recipient of the highest award of the National Council for Research in the Teaching of English and was honored in 1992 as a recipient of the Hall of Fame award from the International Reading Association. The Martha L. King Center for Language and Literacies was so named upon Dr. King’s retirement from the University.

In the 1970’s, Dr. King and Dr. Charlotte Huck were responsible for initiation of an innovative teacher education program (Educational Programs in Informal Classrooms – EPIC), which was recognized as a model for excellence in teacher education and is still being used. Even in retirement, Dr. King continued to provide leadership in the in the College of Education.

Dr. King died on Friday, March 26, 2007, on her 89th birthday. Her inspiration continues through the work of the Martha King Center and her students.

MARTHA L. KING: LANGUAGE ARTS PIONEER

by Evelyn B. Freeman

On arriving at my classroom the day after Labor Day, I found 24 children sitting in four rows, evenly divided among four grades, including six in the first grade. The children were there, but books, learning materials of any kind, were scarce or badly worn and dirty. There was a box of chalk sitting on a window ledge and I remembered Experience Charts and Stories that I had learned about at the university. After two years, I moved to a larger school where I had only the second and third grades in one room. Later, when I began teaching a seventh grade in Athens County, the principal came to my door on the first day with a full box of chalk in his hand and greeted me with, 'Now here is a full box of chalk and a good teacher will empty it by Spring.'

Over tea in her living room, I listened to Martha King's animated stories about her life and work, including this description of her first teaching job in a two-room school in rural Rehoboth, Ohio, in 1938. I quickly realized that the passing of 65 years has not diminished her zest for life, her enthusiasm for learning, or her belief in children and teachers.

Martha L. King is Professor Emerita at The Ohio State University where she was a faculty member for 25 years. This Profile introduces Language Arts readers to a remarkable and inspirational woman whose contributions over more than four decades added immeasurably to our understandings of children's oral language, critical reading, and writing.

<http://mlk.ehe.osu.edu/eminent-scholars/>