REMEMBERING
SHIRLEY HORD

It is with sadness that we report that our friend and colleague, Shirley Hord, died in October at the age of 90. Hord was known to many as a prolific writer, scholar, and researcher, and she had an immeasurable impact on Learning Forward and the field of professional learning.

Shirley Hord spent much of her career associated with the University of Texas and the Southwest Education Development Laboratory (SEDL). Her work focused on implementing change in schools, professional learning communities, professionalization, and professional development standards.

She was involved with Learning Forward for nearly 30 years, as a lead faculty member for the second graduating class of the Academy, as the research advisor on several editions of the Standards for Professional Learning, overseeing the development of the Standards Assessment Inventory, and chairing the evaluation committee of the Learning Forward Foundation.

Upon her retirement from SEDL, Hord was named Learning Forward’s scholar laureate. Since 2012, Learning Forward has presented the Shirley Hord Learning Team Award in her honor (co-presented with Corwin), an annual recognition of a learning team of educators implementing a teacher-led cycle of continuous improvement that transforms teaching.

Stephanie Hirsh, former executive director of Learning Forward, said, “She helped each one of us who had the honor of collaborating with her become deeper thinkers, better communicators, and deliberate planners. She was our guiding star.”

EMPOWERING
TEACHERS
TO LEAD
LEARNING

Teacher-led professional learning as a driver for strategic improvement was the focus of a panel discussion Learning Forward co-hosted in October in Washington, D.C.

The Learning Policy Institute, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Education Association co-sponsored the event, which was inspired by new research described in this issue’s Research Review article on p. 16 about California’s Instructional Leadership Corps (ILC) and the value its teachers placed on learning from their colleagues.

Panelists from states and districts, ILC, the sponsor organizations, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards provided insight into specific strategies, including teachers using feedback and analysis to educate colleagues on content and pedagogy and intentional use of thought partners to assist with addressing real-time instructional issues.

Nikki Mouton, Learning Forward’s senior vice president of business development, consulting, and content, encouraged leaders to view professional learning as more than a workshop or inservice and acknowledge it as a foundational driver for change and improved results. She also emphasized the need for a strategic approach and alignment across a district or organization so that professional learning doesn’t get stuck in “silos.” Instead, she said, members of the organization should be working in “swim lanes — everybody has their role to play, but they’re all in the same pool of learning. They’re learning some of the same concepts, and the outcomes are all related.”

Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association, said that professional learning shouldn’t be limited to teachers, adding the need to include “the learning community, the support staff, the bus drivers. It’s everyone who has an impact on those students.”

Panelists also addressed the importance of active engagement by leaders at all levels in professional learning and the conditions, contexts, policies, and funding needed to leverage the momentum for continued progress. Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, pointed out the importance of policy in improving professional learning. She said, “Policy won’t work without people believing in it. We have to examine how we actually align values with policy, focusing on collaboration in professional development and creating teacher agency.”

Access the presentation video and related resources from this panel at learningpolicyinstitute.org/event/empowering-teacher-learning.