

Foreword

The optimal intervention package is never final or complete . . . intervention approaches must perpetually evolve.—Arnold P. Goldstein

The legacy of Arnold P. Goldstein (1933–2002) spans a remarkable career, blending science with practice to address the most pressing problems of modern youth. The bookends of Arnie’s shelf of writings both concern the theme of lasting behavior change. A half century ago, he joined Kenneth Heller and Lee Sechrest as they mined experimental and cognitive research for secrets of how learning endures. In two final books, he set the challenge for the decades ahead: What methods yield lasting change? And how do we engage resistant youth as partners in the process of change?

There are 300 approaches to control student violence, Arnie mused, most based on hearsay, hope, and desperation. While such behavior is challenging to change, most real-world programs are punitive, permissive, or defeatist. For example, he questioned attempts in recent years to portray gangs as narrowly pathological, thereby justifying coercive policies. All adolescents seek out peers for satisfaction, and gang membership is seldom exclusively destructive, but offers camaraderie, pride, excitement, and identity.

The strengths perspective was central to Arnie’s philosophy. Seeing potential in all youth motivated his efforts to turn negative peer groups into “prosocial gangs.” He was intrigued by the idea that youth themselves may be credible experts on delinquency. This respect for the voices of youth was exemplified in his book *Delinquents on Delinquency* (Goldstein, 1990). Always open to multiple perspectives, he saw ordinary knowledge as a useful adjunct to professional scientific knowledge.

While some feared that aggregating troubled youth for treatment would lead to peer deviance training, Arnie welcomed the opportunity to work with delinquents as a group. It was his understanding of the power of the friendship group that enabled Aggression Replacement Training (ART) to penetrate the gang culture (Goldstein & Glick, 1987). He recognized the potential of building positive youth cultures through peer helping. In fact, he cited research showing that youth were more motivated to participate in skill instruction if they thought they could use this information to help their peers, a concept that served as the foundation of the EQUIP Program (Gibbs, Potter, & Goldstein, 1995).

From Arnie’s earliest writings, respectful relationships were recognized as the foundation of all successful helping encounters. This universal principle made his interventions relevant across diverse domains of education, prevention, treatment, and corrections. His research showed that it was just as important to enhance the

attractiveness of the helper as to try to change the helpee. While many traditional approaches for troubled youth saw them as “perpetrators,” Arnie embraced Kurt Lewin’s interactionist approach: Behavior is a function of a person interacting with an environment, which Arnie called the “person-environment duet.” If the person is to change, the ecology must be changed.

Finally, Arnie had little time for holy wars among behavioral, cognitive, and developmental perspectives. Instead, he sought to integrate wisdom from these diverse theories. With all of his behavioral expertise, he was among the first to recognize the modest potency of social skills training in isolation. Thus, in ART he added anger management and moral reasoning and designed interventions attuned to the ecology of children and youth. Employing many methods for many needs, he created powerful evidence-based interventions long before the notion was in style. ART evolved into the initial edition of *The Prepare Curriculum* in 1988, revised in 1999. Arnie realized that if we are to meet the needs of those we serve, strategies need to be prescriptive in nature. Thus Prepare provided additional resources to assist change agents. This Prepare Curriculum Implementation Guide provides practitioners with a practical outline for implementing these strategies, in a user friendly, evidence-based manner. In this spirit, those of us who follow in the footsteps of Arnold Goldstein continue the search for methods that create deep learning and enduring change.

LARRY K. BRENDTRO, PhD
STARR COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING
ALBION, MICHIGAN

References

- Gibbs, J.C., Potter, G.B., & Goldstein, A.P. (1995). *The EQUIP Program: Teaching youth to think and act responsibly through a peer-helping approach*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Goldstein, A.P. (1988). *The Prepare Curriculum: Teaching prosocial competencies*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Goldstein, A.P. (1990). *Delinquents on delinquency*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Goldstein, A.P. (1999). *The Prepare Curriculum: Teaching prosocial competencies* (Rev. ed.). Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Goldstein, A.P., & Glick, B. (1987). *Aggression Replacement Training: A comprehensive intervention for aggressive youth*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.