Preface

Knowledge of basic language structure is the foundation of all other areas of language competency—vocabulary, reading comprehension, study skills, handwriting, and expressive writing. Symbolically, basic language structure is the *keystone* of the arch of language skills; it is the element that stabilizes all other pieces.

*Keystone: A Teacher's Guide to Basic Language Structure* was originally developed at The New Community School, a private school for students with dyslexia in Richmond, Virginia. The three-fold purpose was to construct a framework for teaching the predictable basic structure of language, to provide a guide for training language teachers, and to collate resource materials for teacher reference.

These purposes for *Keystone* remain valid today, though certainly great changes have occurred in our society’s collective knowledge about remedial reading instruction. Research is now confirming the validity of systematic, explicit phonics instruction for students who have specific difficulty learning language code. Through these years the remarkable characteristic of *Keystone* is that it remains relevant. The structure of our language has not changed. At one time, *Keystone* contributed by filling a void in the silence. Now it gives guidance to the teacher who may become lost in the maze of publishing house reading programs, state and local regulations, and the legitimate but anxiety-producing calls for accountability in teaching basic skills to our children.

*Keystone: A Guide for Teaching Language Structure* is based on the multi-sensory approach of Dr. Samuel T. Orton, Anna Gillingham, and Bessie Stillman. It presents a sequential outline for teaching basic language structure to the student with specific language learning differences. *Keystone* evolved as an independent assignment for a course taught by Alice Ansara at the University of Richmond and Loyola College, Baltimore, while she was consultant at The New Community School. We acknowledge gratefully her initial direction and guidance. Materials used have been drawn from many sources since then. Wherever possible, we have acknowledged authorship and regret any omission made inadvertently.

We are deeply grateful for the guidance and invaluable support of Julia Ann Greenwood, Head of the School, and the initial editorial assistance of Charlotte Morgan. We also appreciate the early advice and suggestions of Margaret Rawson, Diana King, Alice Koontz, and Ruth Harris (all members of TNCS Advisory Board), as well as Dr. Barbara Guyer (a member of the Board of Trustees). Subsequent revisions included the advice and counsel of Martie Torza-Simmons, Marsha Olson, and Amy Goode, Chairs of the Language Fundamentals Department of the school. Lastly, we are indebted to the many users of *Keystone*. Their questions have pushed us for more answers and their suggestions have brought on useful improvements.

At The New Community School, *Keystone* not only provides guidance for teaching individual students, but also serves effectively as a resource for small group instruction. However, it is critical that the students in a group share comparable skill and developmental levels. In any setting, we encourage teachers to use this guide with consideration for the individual needs and learning differences of their students. These unique needs of the individual learner are the primary concern of the most effective teacher.