



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **THE MELISSA INSTITUTE FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ESTABLISHES LITERACY WEB SITE FOR EDUCATORS**

### **Renowned Child Literacy Expert Dr. Dale Willows to Lead Site's Development**

Miami, FL (February 6, 2008) -- Internationally acclaimed reading expert, Dr. Dale Willows, has agreed to establish a literacy Web site in conjunction with The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment. The proposed site will serve as an integral tool in providing professional development information and training for elementary school teachers. Research on literacy, compiled by The Melissa Institute, has uncovered the following:

- Reading is necessary for good grades and success in school. Children who learn to read by the end of third (3<sup>rd</sup>) grade will almost always finish high school.
- Children with low reading scores in grades K – 3 often have more problems with poor grades, failing a grade, dropping out of school, drug abuse, early pregnancy, delinquency, and unemployment.
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This educational and informational site will be largely based on the "Balanced Literacy Diet," a proprietary program developed by Willows after more than 25 years of research and application in the child literacy field. This site will be a hub of information for educators, offering a free and comprehensive tool designed to have a direct impact on the quality of literacy education in the classrooms of teachers who utilize this site. Development is underway, and the site is anticipated to be operational by June 2011.

"This Web site is the seamless marriage of Willows' extensive knowledge in the field of child literacy and The Melissa Institute's interest in the high correlation that exists between early literacy and violence prevention," said Donald Meichenbaum, Research Director of The Melissa Institute. Institute President Susan Keeley observed; "In working together with Dr. Willows, we expect that this site will become an indispensable tool that will empower educators to help increase literacy, and in so doing, help lower the risk of their students participating in future violent behavior."

Dale Willows, Ph.D. is a member of the U.S. National Reading Panel and the only Canadian appointed to that prestigious body. She is also an esteemed Professor in the Department of Human Development and Applied Psychology at the University of Toronto and a member of the Scientific Board of The Melissa Institute.

The Melissa Institute is a not-for-profit organization based in Miami, Florida. The Institute's mission is to prevent violence and promote safer communities through education and application of research-based knowledge, utilizing education, consultation, community service and research support.

For additional information please visit [www.melissainstitute.org](http://www.melissainstitute.org) and [www.teachsafeschools.org](http://www.teachsafeschools.org).