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**A Pooch Leads the Way to Playground Safety**

**BCI Burke, Weekly Reader, industry and non-profit organizations team-up to educate schoolchildren on safe play**

During the month of April, over 750,000 Kindergarten children and their families will be motivated to play safer on their playgrounds through an engaging curriculum distributed to classrooms across the country. The Play Smart, Play Safe program will reach the hands of over 45,000 teachers just in time for National Playground Safety Week, April 25-29. Through a momentous collaboration of BCI Burke, Weekly Reader, playground industry organizations, the non-profit sector and an industry trade publisher, the loveable hound dog Slyde the Playground Hound, will teach kids how to play safe on the playground.

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In addition to BCI Burke and Weekly Reader, this historic partnership includes Sof'Fall Inc, Play Matta, Today's Playground Magazine and the National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS).

“This is the first time in the history of the playground industry that a comprehensive safety program for children will be taught in schools to so many children at one time,” noted Cheryl Kaczmarek, director of Marketing for BCI Burke. “It couldn't have happened without the expertise and collaboration of everyone involved.”

Weekly Reader® is the recognized leader of children's news and unique educational programs that reinforce curriculum, help teachers meet standards and engage students. Weekly Reader is subscribed to by teachers as a primary means of obtaining and teaching the most current information on important topics such as stranger danger, bike helmet use and proper personal hygiene. They have chosen to focus on playground safety for the first time in their long history.

“We are very excited about this program,” said Peter Esposito, President of Weekly Reader Consumer and Custom Publishing. “Teaching playground safety in the classroom will help children understand that playing safe is playing smart.”

Slyde, the star of the entertaining and informative activities guide and brightly colored classroom poster promotes cool and careful ways to have safe fun on the playground. The Play Smart, Play Safe program expands its message to include safety information for teachers and playground supervisors and tips for parents and guardians. Teachers may also download a copy of the Play Smart, Play Safe curriculum by visiting [www.playgroundhound.com/teachersguide.htm](http://www.playgroundhound.com/teachersguide.htm)s

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“Delivery is the key to this program,” says Curtis Stoddard, creator of Slyde the Playground Hound and a child safety advocate. “Slyde presents a message of safe play that is entertaining and fun. Children listen to Slyde and identify with him.”

The Play Smart, Play Safe program stresses that children, parents, teachers and playground supervisors all have a role and responsibility to be aware of potential playground safety hazards. Improper use of playground equipment or playing on equipment that is not safe can lead to minor fractures, permanent brain damage or even strangulation that can lead to death.

The thought of rushing a child to the emergency room as the result of a fall or other injury is a dreadful image for parents or teachers to consider as they take their children to the playground. However, more than 200,000 children are injured seriously enough each year on playgrounds that require emergency room attention.

“Our goal is to reduce the number and severity of injuries to our children,” says Dr. Susan Hudson, Director of Education for the NPPS which also originated the concept of National Playground Safety Week. “We are excited to be a part of this noteworthy program to make kids, parents and teachers more aware of safe play at school, in their local parks and even at home.”

Slyde the Playground Hound will make a guest appearance at the 84<sup>th</sup> annual National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) conference in Baltimore, Maryland April 15-18. Contact Cheryl Kaczmarek for details at 920-921-9220 ext. 3020.

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As the oldest playground company in the United States, BCI Burke's team is committed to designing, engineering and building only the highest quality and safe playground, park and recreation equipment. Countless exciting, innovative and imaginative company projects are happening that play up the core values of affordable quality, ongoing customer service that is second to none, child development and safety.

All BCI Burke products meet or exceed the guidelines of the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) and the standards of ASTM International and are a founding and active member of International Play Equipment Manufacturer's Association(IPEMA.) BCI Burke's partnerships with Slyde the Playground Hound and the NPPS fortifies their pledge to kid's safe play. In addition, the company is the only playground manufacturer that provides a free NPPS Playground Supervision Safety Kit with every modular play structure. The kit includes an in-depth training manual outlining the ABC's of safe supervision, a video to help train supervisors and a brightly-colored fanny pack to help supervisors be prepared and more visible on the playground.

BCI Burke, headquartered in Fond du Lac, WI, proudly applies the longest, strongest product warranties in the playground industry including 100-year limited coverage on posts, clamps, fastening systems and hardware and 15-year limited warranty on plastics.

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