

Evaluation Highlights of Safety Smarts

by SWM Consulting Services and BIM Larsson & Associates

Since 1998, the Farm Safety Centre (FSC) has offered the Safety Smarts program free-of-charge to schools in rural Alberta. The program consists of seven in-person farm safety presentations with interactive activities and curricula that are tailored to children in Kindergarten to grade six.

The evaluation of Safety Smarts in 2016-2017 sought to understand how the program is implemented in different school contexts and what difference participation makes to current and former students. Multiple mixed methods were used to collect data from program stakeholders. Please contact the Farm Safety Centre for the full evaluation report at safetyctr@abfarmsafety.com.

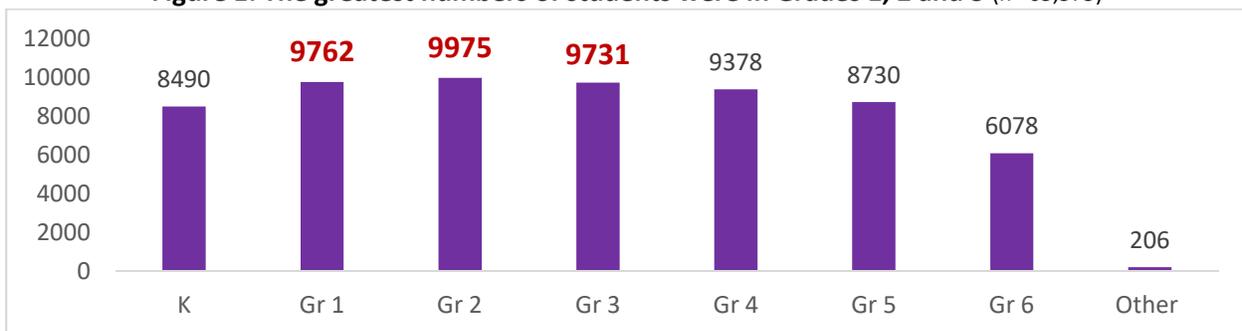
ULTIMATE AIM OF SAFETY SMARTS: *Local instructors with farm experience deliver evidence-based, farm safety instruction to rural children to increase their awareness and knowledge of farm hazards and build pro-safety attitudes that endure as they mature.* **Overall, the evaluation results indicate that the ultimate aim of the Safety Smarts program was achieved.** Program implementation was consistent with the logic model.

HOW WAS SAFETY SMARTS IMPLEMENTED IN DIFFERENT SCHOOL CONTEXTS?

Safety Smarts is delivered in classrooms by Instructors who are passionate about farm safety, have farming experience and understand children. When scheduling presentations, they accommodate school preferences and “... *make it easy for them... make sure I’m not imposing*” (Instructor). Overall, the Instructors blend their knowledge of schools and the community with tact, discretion and sensitivity.

In 2016-2017, Instructors delivered a total of **3,304 presentations to 65,575 students in 537 Alberta schools and 18 Saskatchewan schools**; grades 1, 2 and 3 were the most common (Figure 1). Most students were from public and separate schools (called Rural); a minority (n=3,205) were Hutterite students (called Colony).

Figure 1: The greatest numbers of students were in Grades 1, 2 and 3 (n= 65,575)



Across all of the grade levels and schools, 98% of classroom teachers believe farm safety is an important topic to discuss with their students. They believe the Safety Smarts curriculum is relevant, age-appropriate and culturally respectful. Nearly all Colony teachers (96%) and 78% of Rural teachers intend to integrate farm safety messages

throughout the school year. Ninety-eight per cent of classroom teachers and 91% of parents of Rural students who responded to the surveys support continued Safety Smarts presentations.

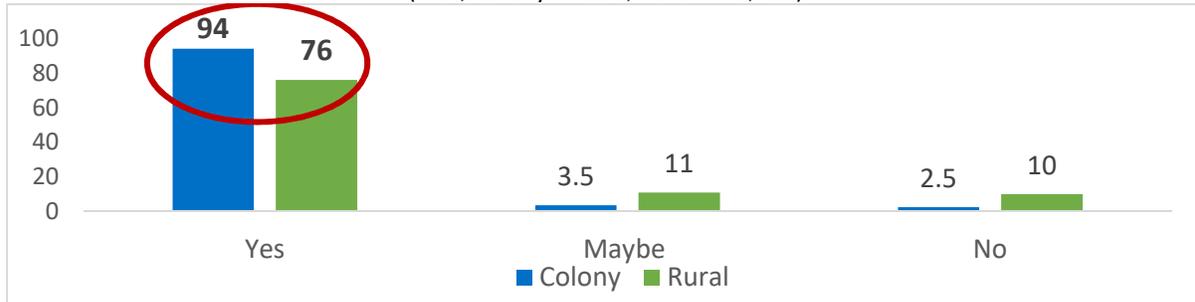
WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES SAFETY SMARTS MAKE?

“Grandpa stressed don’t touch the PTO... the Farm Safety Lady explained why.”

(Young Adult who participated in Safety Smarts)

Children find the presentations engaging and understand the safety messages. Three-quarters (76%) of Rural grade 6 students and 94% of Colony students 12 years and older remembered safety messages and slogans from previous presentations (Figure 2). Fifteen years after they attended the program in Rural and Colony schools, young adults recalled the interactive activities, demonstrations and key messages. The face-to-face delivery and interactive explanations provided by the ‘Farm Safety Lady’ (Instructor) were critical to the lasting impact.

Figure 2: Many students remember messages from previous years, especially on Colonies.
(in %, Colony n =596, Rural n= 3,288)



As they progress through the presentations, students learn and have increasingly positive attitudes towards safety. Most students understand the material and intend to take responsibility for their safety on the farm (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3: Rural students intend to be safer.
(%, n=3,288)

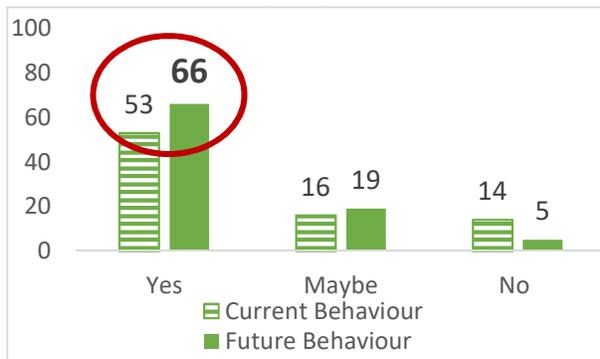
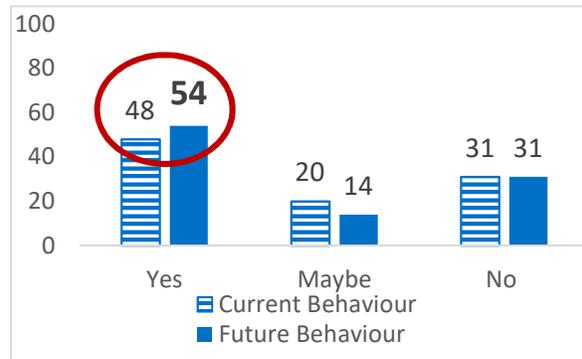


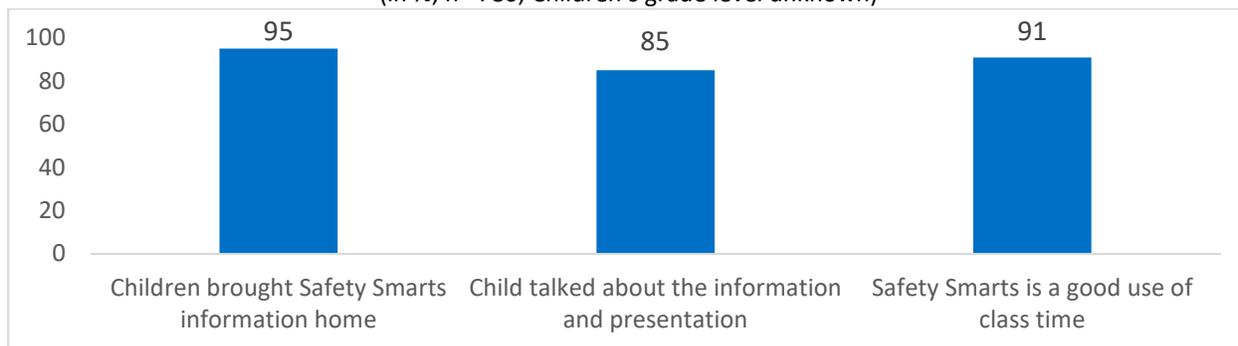
Figure 4: Colony students intend to be safer.
(%, n=596)



While few parents attended the in-class presentations, the safety messages seemed to reach them. More Colony students (76%) than Rural grade 6 students (51%) intended to talk with their parents about farm safety. However, almost all of the Rural parents (95%) surveyed saw the farm safety materials their child brought home and 85% reported that their children talked about the program. Most parents (91%) believed Safety Smarts is a good use of class time (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Farm safety messages reach Rural parents

(in %, n= 780; Children's grade level unknown)



Young adults from Colony and Rural schools who participated in Safety Smarts believe safety is critical to Colony and commercial farm operations. They conceptualize safety as a shared responsibility between an individual and the farm boss or owner. Even though they believe it is important, some Colony young adults acknowledged that *“Sometimes we don’t take it seriously, don’t take the time to be safe...”* (Hutterite Young Adults).

CONCLUSIONS

Following the Safety Smarts presentations, students from different school contexts know the main safety risks on the farm and strategies to stay safe. This knowledge endures and deepens as the children progress through the levels of the program, and beyond. Young adults who participated in the program when they were children have pro-safety mind-sets and value farm safety.

NEXT STEPS

Maintaining Safety Smart’s success requires strategic consideration of three areas for continuous quality improvement:

- Optimize professional development content and strategies for Instructors.
- Maintain a relevant, up-to-date curriculum through systematic curriculum review.
- Address other logistical challenges related to travel and working conditions.