Hello Pioneer Valley School District
Elementary School Parents,

Many kids have devices that connect to the internet (iphone, tablets, gaming systems and laptops) which are essentially gateways to the world. We are beginning to educate our students about the safe usage of these devices, and I recently I met with the 4th, 5th and 6th grades classes to discuss internet and technology safety. We discussed how to keep electronics safe and secure by having them password protected, and that their passwords should be kept private but <u>ALWAYS</u> shared with parents & guardians to ensure an adult can gain access to their devices for safety reasons. We discussed keeping their devices safe by never downloading programs without adult supervision, and to ask an adult to help them setting up their electronics. All devices should be installed with a location service like "FIND MY IPHONE" or "GOOGLE PHONE FINDER", so that if it is lost or stolen, it can be easily recovered.

We also discussed navigating the web safely, including never talking to someone online that you do not know (stranger danger applies to the web, too), as well as never telling someone your real name, address or the names of your family, or sending someone you do not know pictures, or accepting their photos. Many gaming systems allow people to voice chat within games, and kids were encouraged to mute, block or report those who may be saying inappropriate things, and to report anything they think is inappropriate that they encounter on the web to an adult- whether that be a teacher, parent, guardian or the school resource officer!

The last thing we talked about was social media, and acting responsibly as a Digital Citizen. Students were asked to identify the numerous logos for social media, and most were well known. Many kids stated that they had active social media accounts such as Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat and Twitter. Students were told that the minimum age for all of these sites is <u>thirteen years-old</u>, which is something they and parent should be mindful of. Anything they post online could last forever, so they should do so responsibly and with mindfulness toward others.

As parents, it is very difficult to monitor our children's access to the web with today's technology. Encouraging our kids to be open and honest about their online encounters and activity, and discussing the hazards of navigating the internet is the best preventative measure to keep kids safe. Many children received tech-toys as gifts during the holidays, and it is important to keep these tips in mind and talk to your children about them.

Please reach out if you have questions, concerns or are seeking tips about how to ensure your child's safety while they are using electronics. Please visit my web page for helpful tips, links, videos and the presentations that were shown to the kids at school at <u>pvrs.pvrsdk12.org/about/sro</u>.

Heath Cummings
School Resource Officer

Pioneer Valley Regional School District
Town of Northfield Police Department
(413)-498-2931 ex. 112
cummingsh@pvrsdk12.org