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Suffolk Law students to teach online privacy to Boston-area middle schoolers

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Suffolk University Law school student volunteers will launch a new initiative next month to teach Boston-area middle school students about online privacy and security, campus officials said.

The [project](#) will feature one-hour sessions geared toward teaching middle schoolers about a host of topics including: Internet privacy basics, dealing with passwords and behavioral ads, navigating social media, understanding mobile, Wi-Fi and facial recognition, and managing a “digital reputation.”

“We are very excited about bringing this important issue of privacy and our digitally networked world to middle-school students in Massachusetts,” professor Jessica Silbey, one of the project’s leaders, said. “Our Suffolk Law students are keenly aware of issues regarding social networks and digital technology, especially as they impact law practice and justice.”

Also leading the project are Professor Rebecca Curtin and Mia Friedman, director of public interest and pro bono programs at Suffolk Law’s Rappaport Center for Law and Public Service.

“This project will not only provide middle-school students with much-needed knowledge about how to handle privacy matters in their everyday lives, but it will give Suffolk Law students the chance to make a difference by going out into the community and teaching about the law,” Friedman said.

Studies by the Pew Research Center show that 93 percent of people aged 12 to 17 go online, which ties with the young adult cohort, age 18 to 29, for the highest proportion of Internet users.

More teens are using popular social media sites like Facebook and Twitter and more are posting personal information about themselves online, according to the [Pew studies](#).

Ninety-one percent of teens post a photo of themselves, 82 percent post their birth date; nearly three-quarters of teens post the name of the school they attend and the city of town they live in; 53 percent post their email address; 20 percent post their cell phone number, according to Pew reports.

One-third of teens are “connected” online to people they have never met.

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Curriculum for the middle-school online privacy education program, developed through a partnership between Suffolk Law and Fordham University Law School's Center for Law and Information Policy, was first taught to New York City seventh graders in the spring as part of a pilot program.

Fordham Law has made the curriculum available to educators as a set of free open source documents on its Center for Law and Information Policy website.

A number of other law schools across the country have partnered with Fordham to participate in the program, including Harvard University's Berkman Center.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mjrochele@gmail.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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