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Earlier this school year, when a fight broke out in a class of junior high students filling out surveys about conflict management, two UD law students teaching the class put theory directly into practice.

Ryan Beck and Megan Rehberg, two of six UD law students in a partnership between Dayton Public Schools and the UD School of Law to teach conflict management skills, called it the ultimate teaching moment. Since then, things are changing for the better.

"We've been pleasantly surprised how the seventh- and eighth-graders have responded to the lessonst," Rehberg said. "There has been a big change from when the students filled out the survey. They didn't want to listen. Now, they listen and take things to hear. Wogaman has even implemented a peer mediation program."

Students in fifth through eighth grades at Wogaman, Van Cleve and Rosa Parks schools are part of the pilot program. Two UD law students work with each school.

Rosa Parks Principal Mitzi Sanders has seen suspension rates decrease at her school. Students are doing classroom chores without being asked and encouraging others to stay on the straight-and-narrow.

"We're going to keep inspiring others to get involved," Sanders said. "If you don't have everyone on board, you can't be successful. Teachers are taking more responsibility, doing more detentions and being more involved."

The program incorporates 25 lessons developed by the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management. The lessons work conflict management skills into lessons about Romeo and Juliet and historical events such as World War I.

Program support has come from the United Way of the Greater Dayton Area, the Dayton law firm Porter, Wright, Morris and Arthur, NCR Corp. and the Dayton Foundation.

According to the commission, Ohio leads the nation in statewide programming in conflict resolution education. More than 400 of Ohio's 612 public school districts report having some form of conflict management program.