

INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

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GREAT DECISIONS PROGRAM

Although it began as a way for Northeast Florida high school students to connect with local college professors to discuss foreign policy issues, The World Affairs Council of Jacksonville's Great Decisions Program has grown to offer participating students from 16 local schools a broad range of opportunities to interact with influential luminaries and foreign policy experts, from Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak to former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Philip M. Breedlove.

Though the after-school and in-school discussions with college professors still represent the core of the program, Uli Decker, the director of education and community outreach for the World Affairs Council, said the speaker interactions have been wildly popular with participants.

"The student interactions are the spark of a new idea or a

connection to the speaker," Decker says of the events, which begin with a kickoff dinner and one-hour dialogue with a foreign policy expert or global leader. "Then they can go back to school and do a deep dive."

Started in 2004, The Great Decisions Program is put on by The World Affairs Council of Jacksonville – a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a globally astute local populace. The Great Decisions Program hosts other events during the year, including an "international crisis exercise."

"We feel that it's as important as ever to prepare students to participate in a global world," says Decker. "[The Great Decisions Program] helps students connect global issues to their local community."

– Matthew Shaw