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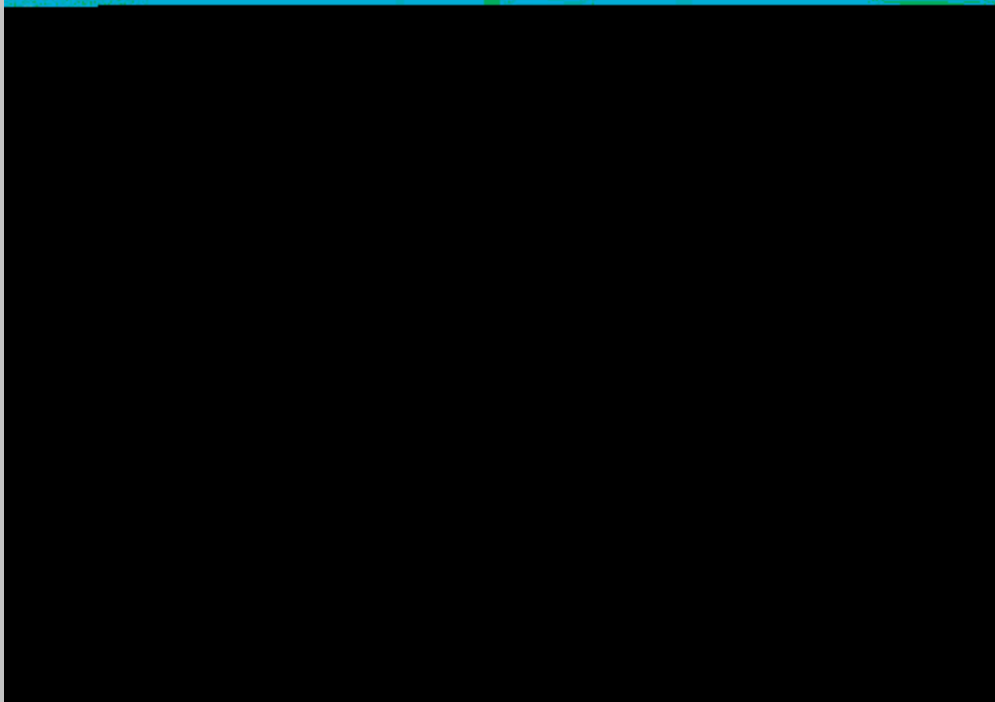
As comments accumulate in the chat room, Mrs. Florio skims the chatter and looks for areas of confusion that run across student posts; she also challenges students to find common themes. It soon becomes clear that several students didn't fully understand the economic differences between North and Sout sa (d) 0.4 (s ) 0.2 (b) 0.4.2 0.14 (r) -

## Scenario 4. Formative Assessment

Near the end of her advanced placement world history class on responses to the spread of global capitalism, Mrs. Burke asks her students to summarize the day's most important idea in a post using Socrative, a student-response system that enables users to post comments or questions in real time. After her students have submitted their individual summaries, Mrs. Burke shows the class the collected responses and has them vote on which is best (see fig. 2). The students select Steph's summary:

Mrs. Burke invites two students who voted for this summary to explain its strengths, and the class closes with a brief frontchannel discussion of similarities and differences in a few of the other summaries.

**Figure 2. Which Statement Best Summarizes the Day's Lesson?**



The record of the backchannel discussion helps Mrs. Burke make two decisions about her plan for the next class period. First, Alex's summary revealed that he did not understand that Marxism was in opposition to capitalism. She

thumbs up to peers' posts so that the most interesting or important content rises to the top.

### **Including Everyone's Perspectives**

Young people who are shy or who prefer to carefully craft their thoughts may benefit from backchanneling. The positive reception of their ideas in the backchannel may encourage these students to speak up in the frontchannel. Teachers can also bring forward the backchannel contributions of learners who may be uncomfortable sharing.

Digital backchannels can help students who face educational, economic, social, cultural, or other obstacles develop stronger academic identities. In fact, the stars of the backchannel are often not those who excel in traditional classroom discussions (Hunter & Caraway, 2014).

For example, English language learners who feel self-conscious about their speaking skills have the opportunity in the backchannel to more deliberately craft their thoughts (Harry, Gordon, & Schmandt, 2012). Students on the autism spectrum who struggle to negotiate the social cues of traditional classroom discussions may feel more comfortable contributing digitally.

The backchannel can bring the voices of all students into discussions, ensuring that a variety of perspectives are

Negotiating the challenges associated with backchanneling is worth the effort. To teach effectively, educators need to