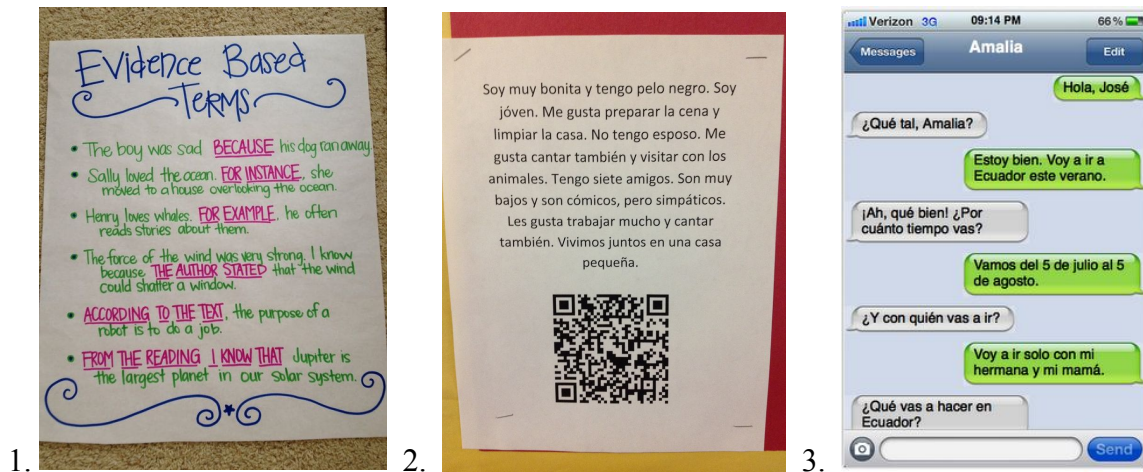


I have really enjoyed expanding my Professional Learning Network (PLN), starting with the formation of a professional Twitter account. I have found many useful education-based sources and have also had a chance to connect professionally with my classmates as well as many of my co-workers. It is great to see what is happening as educators connect in non-traditional ways outside of the confines of the structured school day. I have also found another tool that can greatly improve the reach of my PLN, which is Pinterest. Although I have found that many ideas on Pinterest are geared toward elementary school content, I have had success with generating ideas for my secondary foreign language classroom. Also, since I teach English Language Learners, many of the ideas meant for elementary language arts are still applicable in my high school classroom because of the low language abilities of my students. I have also been able to connect with former students who are not teachers themselves. This is not only a good confidence booster in terms of realizing that you are making a difference, but it is also refreshing and inspiring to see the enthusiasm of educators in their first or second year as they are at square one when it comes to molding what kind of an educator they will become. One thing I like about Pinterest more than Twitter is that is much more visual. A 'pin' is always accompanied by a picture, which draws the eye. It is more hands on while the content I have gotten from Twitter is more idea and theory based.

Here are some examples of ideas that I have gotten from connecting with other educators on Pinterest:



The first graphic is a poster giving examples of evidence-based terms. Although many students struggle with using evidence from the text to support their ideas, English Language Learners especially can benefit from having this cheat sheet to help develop their writing. The second graphic is an idea for a foreign language classroom in which students write a description or riddle of a person with a QR code beneath. Students then go around and read the descriptions and then scan the code with their cell phones to find the answer to the riddle. Any time students can use their cell phones for something at school it is likely that they will be more engaged. This is also an advantage of the activity in the third graphic. This is a screenshot from a fake text conversation in Spanish created on ifaketext.com. A couple of the major challenges when teaching a foreign language are to find variety in daily activities and to make the content authentic for learners. This provides a solution for both of those problems. Students are engaged because they are being encouraged to text in class instead of discouraged and, even though the conversation is fake, it is in an authentic communication format with which our students use to communicate every day.