My lesson plan, “A Google-y Walk” was derived from my interest in media and technology. I have always been concerned about the overwhelming usage of technological instruments in daily life and its effects on people. For this assignment, I am developing the first lesson of a “Technology Unit”. I will begin with a brief explanation of my lesson and its goals then talk about how this plan works to address and speak to what we have been learning in class. I will specifically incorporate Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, Piaget’s stages of Cognitive Development, and the effects of media and technology on adolescents.

Vygotsky’s theory stated that, “human activities take place in cultural settings and cannot be understood apart from these settings” (Woolfolk & Perry, 2012). In this respect, I can safely say that most of the adolescents that have grown up in North America in the last decade, have experienced generous amounts of exposure to technology and all its offerings. Cellphones, Internet, and computers are cultural tools (2012) that permeate all our lives to the point where it is nearly inescapable. They are found in homes, offices, schools, shopping malls, and even on airplanes. Children as young as 3 now are using Smartphones to access the Internet, watch videos, and play games. The Internet has certainly shaped gaming culture whereby accessibility to the online fantasy is as easy as a click of a mouse.

My goal of this lesson, “A Google-y Walk” is to encourage my students to think critically about the role of the Internet, specifically “virtual realities” and how they are affected by it. If it is true that, “the average American teen spends about 5 hours each day consuming screen media (cited in Carnagey, Anderson, & Bartholomew, 2007) and that there is a growing trend of “Internet addiction” (as cited in Greenfield, 1999; Kim et al., 2006; Lin & Tsai, 2002), then there is a definite need to hold a discussion with youth about the effects and repercussions of these technologies. Here, I can draw reference to Piaget’s fourth stage of Cognitive Development, “Formal Operational”. This stage normally forms around age 11 and continues onto adulthood. It is defined by the ability to “solve abstract problems in logical fashion, become more scientific in thinking, and develop concerns about social issues and identity” (Woolfolk & Perry, 2012, p. 49). By Grade 11, the students should be able to think critically and articulate the differences and similarities they observe in “virtual reality”- an abstract concept, and “reality”. Through the use of inductive reasoning based on these observations, the students will be able to draw conclusions on what their definition of “virtual reality” is and apply this understanding to future projects about virtual reality and technology.

My art activity addresses the “realities”, both virtual and the real world. In my personal life, I know people who love to play video games to the point where it becomes an obsession. Unfortunately, many of these video games are violent and evidence has been shown that it decreases prosocial behaviour and increases aggression (Woolfolk & Perry, 2012). My activity will involve comparing Google Maps and Street view (virtual reality) with the actual, *real* streets (reality) in person. Because I am unable to physically put students into a video game, I figured that Google Maps was the next best option. The students are to choose a path they want to explore on Google Street view and note their observations. Afterwards, they are to walk the exact route they viewed on Street view and compare their observations. I emphasized the need to compare and contrast the two realities. Some of the questions that I would like the students to address are:

*What is missing in “virtual reality” compared to the “reality”? What is included?*

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*Can we trust technology?*

*Is one better than the other?*

*Are there parts that are inaccessible in virtual reality? (Specifically Google maps) Why?*

*Who has access to virtual reality?*

These questions have been formulated for critical thinking. My hope is that the students will use their findings and extrapolate that information into a bigger picture and understanding of the world they live in and the virtual one they engage in on a daily basis. I would hope they realize that “virtual reality” although created to simulate “reality’ is not the same. In fact, they are two sides of the same coin. They speak to each other but they are not equal. I hope that my students who partake in this activity will begin to see that, “not everything is as it seems”, and because of this, they and the people around them must always question the technologies they engage with every day and the underlying reasons for their existence.

References

Woolfolk, A. & Perry, N.E. (2012). *Child and Adolescent Development*. Pearson.