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Activity Idea

WALKING WATER

CAPILLARY ACTION

Recommended for Ages 5 – 10

You will need the following materials:

- 2 – 6 cups
- tap water
- food coloring or liquid watercolors
- paper towels

Instructions

1. Fill each cup or jar halfway with water and add a few drops of food coloring, stir until food color is dissolved in the water, place the jars in a line or in a circle. Do two colors or a whole rainbow.
2. Fold each paper towel into a strip, place one end into one jar and the other end into the next jar, continue until each jar has two paper towel ends in the water.
3. Watch and see what happens!

Why it works

- Capillary Action: water molecules are attracted to each other and will move up the paper towel, against gravity, until the towel is completely saturated
- Surface Tension: water molecules have tension on them, like plastic wrap over a bowl or a drum; this keeps them on the surface of the paper towel, rather than dripping to the counter.
- Where does this happen in the real world?
    - Plants! Plants use capillary action to pull water up from their roots, all the way up their stems and into their leaves.

eBooks on OverDrive

What is the Structure of a Plant? by Louise Spilsbury https://tinyurl.com/sbwmzd2
Water Cycle by Torrey Maloof https://tinyurl.com/u5f4gtr
Deep Roots by Nikki Tate https://tinyurl.com/wglfrb4
Water by Seymour Simon https://tinyurl.com/u33gaxw
National Geographic Readers: Water by Melissa Stewart https://tinyurl.com/vpyh4sk