The Power of Saving Over Time

Utah Core: OPERATIONS AND ALGEBRAIC THINKING Standard 4.OA.3.b

Objective:
Students will understand that saving money over a longer period of time leads to greater growth, especially when money earns interest or builds up through repeated saving.

Materials:

- Clear jar or cup
- A handful of beans, cubes, or counters
- Chart paper or board
- Student notebooks
- Optional: stickers to represent interest

Hook (5 minutes):

Show an empty jar. Ask:

"If I put one bean in this jar every day for a month, how many would I have? What if I did it for a whole year?"

Let a few students guess.

Tell them that saving money works the same way — small amounts add up, and the longer you save, the more it grows.

Mini-Lesson (10 minutes):

Explain in kid-friendly language:

- Saving means putting money away instead of spending it.
- When you save over time, two things happen:
- You keep adding more.
- Sometimes the bank adds extra money called interest (a reward for saving).

Tell them:

“The more time your money stays saved, the more it grows — just like the more days you add beans to the jar, the more it fills up.”

Interactive Activity: Saving Race (15 minutes)

Students compare three savings situations:

Write on the board:

Saver Saved per Week	Weeks Saved Total Saved
• Ava $2	• 2 weeks ?
• Liam $2	• 4 weeks ?
• Noah $2 with interest (bank adds 50¢ each week)**	• 4 weeks ?

Step-by-step:

1. Divide students into groups of 3–4.
2. Give each group counters.
3. Each group models the saving:
    - Ava places 2 counters for 2 weeks.
    - Liam places 2 counters for 4 weeks.
    - Noah places 2 counters for 4 weeks plus one extra counter each week as “interest.”
4. Groups record their totals.

Group discussion:

- Who saved the most? Why?
- What made Noah’s savings grow faster?
- What does this tell us about saving for a long time?

Students should conclude:

More time saved = more growth.

Interest = even more growth.

Independent Practice (10 minutes)

Students complete a simple worksheet:

Example problems:

1. Maya saves $3 a week. How much after 5 weeks?
2. Jordan saves $5 a week. How much after 10 weeks?
3. Which saver has more at the end? Why?
4. Explain in your own words:
   "Why does money grow more the longer it is saved?"

Closing (5 minutes)

Ask students to give a "one-sentence exit ticket":

"One reason it's smart to save money for a long time..."

Examples:

- "You end up with more."
- "It helps you reach big goals."
- "Interest helps your money grow."

Optional Extension

Students create a Savings Goal Poster showing:

- Something they want
- How much it costs
- How many weeks of saving it would take
- How saving longer helps them reach the goal sooner