

Make it Fun and Meaningful

Grade Level: 4

Subject: Math

Topic: Money – Making Change

Learning Goal:

Students will calculate the value of coins and bills and make change up to \$20.

The Activity: Class Store Simulation

Real-life scenario:

Students become shoppers and storekeepers in a mock “Classroom Market,” using realistic play money to buy and sell items like pencils, bookmarks, stickers, and erasers.

How it is fun and meaningful

- **Hands-on:** Students handle money, roleplay, and solve real-world problems.
- **Social:** Students interact with peers, ask questions, and check answers together.
- **Personal:** Items for sale can reflect student interests or be created by students.
- **Engaging:** Students earn “class dollars” throughout the week that they can spend during the activity.

Built-in success and confidence

- Prices and tasks are differentiated (e.g., easier totals for beginning learners, larger totals and multi-item purchases for advanced learners).
- Students work in pairs for peer support.
- Everyone gets something—there is no “wrong way” to participate.
- Teacher highlights effort and accuracy with positive feedback (e.g., “You gave the correct change! That’s great math thinking!”).

Supports for English learners

- Picture labels and bilingual price tags
- Visual money charts posted in the classroom
- Sentence starters for interactions:
 - “How much does this cost?”
 - “Here is my money.”
 - “Do you have change for ___?”

Why It Works

This activity takes a core curriculum goal (calculating money) and makes it come alive. By connecting it to students’ everyday experiences, it becomes more memorable and rewarding, while building both math and language skills in a supportive environment.