

# AZTEC EDUCATION



Boardgame to introduce how the Aztecs organised education and the kind of punishments they used to encourage learning.

You answered your father back. He burned your hair and shaved your head.

THROW A 6 OR 1 TO MOVE

You disobeyed your mother. She held you over a fire of hot chilli peppers and made you breathe in the smoke.

THROW A 3, 4 OR 5 TO MOVE

# AZTEC EDUCATION

Developed by Judith Evans, Steve Ridgewell and Steve Cooke in the early 1990s to support Leicester schools.

Webaddress: [www.collaborativelearning.org/azteceducation.pdf](http://www.collaborativelearning.org/azteceducation.pdf)

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## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

We support a network of teaching professionals to develop and disseminate accessible talk-for-learning activities in all subject areas and for all ages.

17, Barford Street, Islington, London N1 0QB UK Phone: 0044 (0)20 7226 8885

Website: <http://www.collaborativelearning.org>

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies that promote talk across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to develop and use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We want to encourage you to change them and adapt them to your classroom and students. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project posts online many activities in all subject areas. An online newsletter is also updated regularly.

\*These activities are influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in non selective classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of oracy. They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of talk.

\*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

\*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in pupils' first languages and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

\*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

\*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

\*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work more effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

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## Teachers' Notes

1. The first activity is a board game using dice. The board needs to be enlarged to A3. The learning cards need to be photocopied. Note that these sheets are all double-sided. Girls' cards should be copied on blue card and boys' cards on green card.

Punishment cards should be a different colour. The individual cards then need to be cut up.

Pupils play in groups of four. Each player assumes the identity (we have provided name cards) of one of the four Aztec children, Rain Flower, Eagle Snake, Fast Jaguar and Water Bird. The aim is to travel around the board in a clockwise direction to collect learning cards by landing on the numbered squares. When a player lands on a numbered square she or he can take the learning card for that number (green if they are the boys: Eagle Snake or Fast Jaguar, and blue if they are the girls: Water Bird or Rain Flower). If they land on a P square the players must take a 'punishment' card. The winner is the person who collects all six learning cards.

When the game is over or has been played for a sufficient period of time, the pupils can summarise the information gained from the game on proforma provided.

The second activity involves the pupils extracting the relevant information from the schools information texts. The information can be recorded on the table provided.

PS Since this activity was made 'learnt' like 'dreamt' has begun to disappear and 'learned' seems to be drifting over from the US. We have kept learnt this time as a reminder on how fast language can change.



You have learnt how to grind maize and make maize flour.

You have learnt how to look after a baby.

You have learnt how to spin cotton on a spindle.

You have learnt how to weave cloth on a loom.

You have learnt how to prepare and cook food.

You have learnt how to sweep and clean the house.

You are a girl. Your name is Rain Flower.

You are ready to go to the girls' Calmecac school.

1

2

3

4

5

6

RAIN  
FLOWER

Name

You have learnt how to grind maize and make maize flour.

You have learned how to look after a baby.

You have learnt how to spin cotton on a spindle.

You have learnt how to weave cloth on a loom.

You have learnt how to prepare and cook food.

You have learnt how to sweep and clean the house.

You are a girl. Your name is Water Bird.

You are ready to go to the girls' Telpochalli school.

1

2

3

4

5

6

WATER  
BIRD

Name



You have learnt how to catch fish.

You have learnt how to cut reeds and canes.

You have learnt how to handle a canoe.

You have learnt how to use a bow and arrow.

You have learnt how to carry water and other heavy loads.

You have learnt how to cut, collect and carry firewood.

You are a boy Your name is Eagle Snake.

You are ready to go to the boys' Telpochcalli school.

1

2

3

4

5

6

EAGLE  
SNAKE

Name

You have learnt how to catch fish.

You have learnt how to cut reeds and canes.

You have learnt how to handle a canoe.

You have learnt how to use a bow and arrow.

You have learnt how to carry water and other heavy loads.

You have learnt how to cut, collect and carry firewood.

You are a boy Your name is Fast Jaguar.

You are ready to go to the boys' Calmecac school.

1

2

3

4

5

6

FAST  
JAGUAR

Name

You were naughty. Your father beat you with a stick.

MISS A GO

You disobeyed your mother. She held you over a fire of hot chilli peppers and made you breathe in the smoke.

THROW A 3, 4 OR 5 TO MOVE

You were lazy. Your father gave you a long talk about working hard.

GO BACK 3 SQUARES

You did not do your work properly. You had to spend all day sweeping and scrubbing the house.

MISS A GO

You answered your mother back. She stuck cactus spines into your arms and legs.

MISS TWO GOs

You stopped work for a few minutes and your mother noticed. She made you spend all day sweeping and cleaning the streets.

GO BACK 3 SQUARES

You answered your father back. He burned your hair and shaved your head.

THROW A 6 OR 1 TO MOVE

You told a lie. Your mother tied your hands and feet and left you lying on the wet soggy ground for a whole day.

MISS 2 GOs

Punishment

Punishment

Punishment

Punishment

Punishment

Punishment

Punishment

Punishment

# AZTEC EDUCATION

Aztec boys learnt:

Aztec girls learnt:

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

5.

6.

6.

If they were lazy, naughty or disobedient they might:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

## **The Girls' Calmecac School**

The girls who went to the Calmecac School came from rich and noble families. They started at this school when they were about 10 years old. This school was very strict. The girls were not allowed to talk at mealtimes or at other times. They had to wake up two or three times a night to pray and burn incense. The girls learnt about religion and how to embroider special religious cloths for statues of the gods. Some of the girls also learnt to be priests or doctors. Most of the girls left the school when they were 16 years old in order to get married.

## **The Girls' Telpochcalli School**

The girls who went to the Telpochcalli School came from ordinary families and were the daughters of farmers and craftsmen. They started at this school when they were about 10 years old. The school was strict and if the girls were lazy or disobedient they were severely punished. The girls learnt about cleaning, cooking, growing food, looking after babies, spinning cotton and weaving cloth. The girls usually left the school when they were 16 years old to get married.



## **The Boys' Calmecac School**

The boys who went to the Calmecac School came from rich and noble families. They started at this school when they were about 11 years old. Life was very hard at this school. The boys slept on a cold floor and had only tortillas to eat and water to drink. They had to do all the cleaning and also work in the fields. The boys learnt history and religion and how to behave properly. They also had to learn about government, law, maths and architecture. The boys usually left the school when they were about 17 or 18 years old.

## **The Boys' Tepochcalli School**

The boys who went to the Tepochcalli School came from ordinary families and were the sons of farmers and craftsmen. They started at this school when they were about 11 years old. Life was hard at this school and they had to sleep in cold rooms with only a thin blanket to cover them. They had to sweep and clean the school. The boys learnt about history and religion, but they spent most of the time learning to fight and use weapons. This was because when they were older the boys would be expected to fight in the Aztec army. The boys usually left the school when they were about 17 or 18 years old.

# AZTEC SCHOOLS

Name of school.	Who went to this school?	What was the school like?	What did the pupils learn?