

MECCS

A newsletter for Mother Earth's Children's Charter School to share its successful traditional and innovative programming.

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Find driving directions and more at www.meccs.org

Cubing at MECCS

Recently our grades 5 to 9 students and staff welcomed five students from the Edmonton area who shared their enthusiasm for cubing and demonstrated their skills in the activity.

What is cubing? Also called speedcubing or speedsolving, cubing is the competitive sport of solving combination puzzles. These are puzzles that consist of a set of pieces that can be moved into different combinations. The most famous of these “twisty puzzles” is the Rubik's Cube—the same Rubik's Cube that was first popular in the early 1980s. The classic twisty puzzle was invented by Professor E. Rubik from Hungary.

The visiting students are members of the World Cube Association (WCA) and have taken part in various cubing competitions. Isaac Manderscheid, Jens Steenbergen, Erik Varughese and Miles Wright, all grade 7 students from McKernan School in Edmonton, have been learning about Rubik's Cube and other twisty puzzles for anywhere from one to four years. They were joined by grade 2 student Ryan Varughese, who is just starting to learn to cube. The students were able to visit our school thanks to an Edmonton Public Schools PD day.



*Devonte Bearhead
scrambling a very
large Rubik's Cube.*



Left, top: Jens Steenbergen.
Left, bottom: Isaac Manderscheid.

Centre: Miles Wright.

Right, top: Ryan Varughese.
Right, bottom: Erik Varughese explaining the next move to Christie Strong.

Below: McKenna Roan-House, Azarie Bird, Sophie Burnstick, Alec Bird and Miles Wright.





Clockwise from top left:

Miles Wright teaching McKenna Roan-House.

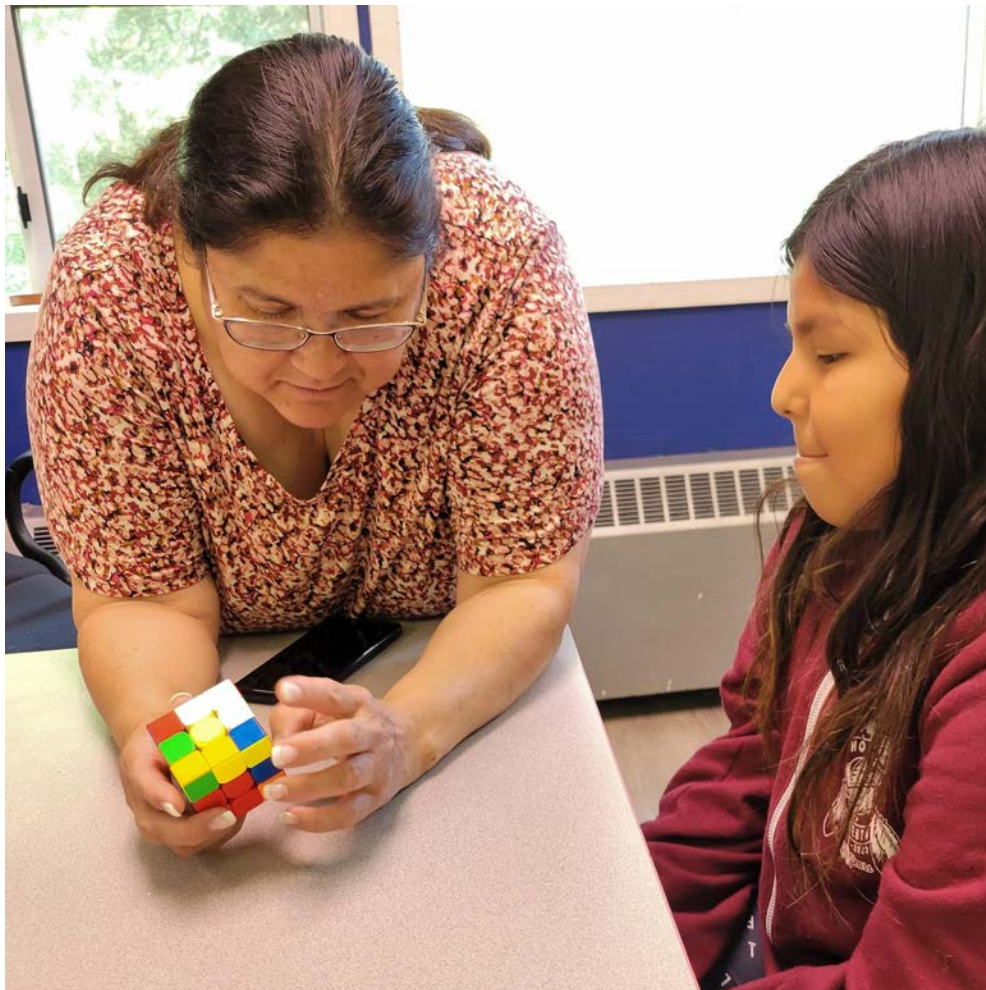
Tyrell Houle and Christie Strong.

Tristan Lafleche.

Erik Varughese with a clock cube.

Nancee Tompkins-Bird and Sophia Burnstick.

Below: Maxine Hildebrandt practising with Azarielle Kimiksana.





Clockwise from top left:

Isaac Manderscheid, Tanya Couzens, Maxine Hildebrandt, Nancee Tompkins-Bird, Azarielle Kimiksana and Arianna Bearhead.

Fully engaged MECCS students.

Tanya Couzens working on a twisty puzzle.

Jens Steenbergen (left) solving a large 3x3 cube.

Ryan Varughese solving a Pyraminx cube.

Jens Steenbergen, Nolan Jolicoeur, Devote Bearhead, Bradley Jolicoeur, Jr., and Tenzin Bird.



The WCA governs competitions for mechanical puzzles, and it holds events around the world each weekend. (There are several competitions in Alberta each year.)

For example, Erik recently competed in the Bay Area Speedcubin' Competition at the University of California, Berkeley. That event included 120 competitors representing nine countries. He set personal competition bests in all five events he entered. The next event he will compete in will be in July at the Canadian Championship in New Westminster, BC.

During their visit to MECCS, the visiting cubers first demonstrated how they can solve a variety of cubes from their own personal collections. These included 2x2, 3x3, 5x5, Pyraminx, clock, Megaminx, Square 1 and banana cubes.

MECCS students were totally engaged during this part of the demonstration. It was interesting to watch them work to scramble a cube until they were sure the visitors could not possibly solve them and then be amazed seconds later when the puzzles were solved.

Our students and staff were then broken into four groups at tables, where they were each taught how to solve a 3x3 cube, one step at a time. They learned about algorithms and how to lubricate their cubes so they could be manipulated easier.



Right, top: Tyrell Houle, Christie Strong, Amira Bird, Ryan Varughese and Erik Varughese.

Right, middle: Our cubing guests visiting the outdoor classroom.

Right, bottom: Jens Steenbergen taking careful aim on our archery course.





Clockwise from top left: Isaac Manderscheid, Miles Wright, Erik Varughese, Ryan Varughese and Tannya Couzens try archery.

Left, bottom: Learning about our Tipi.



To finish up, the visitors walked them through a solve, step by step, showing everyone what was involved. This helped to illustrate how much practice is needed to be able to solve a cube even once. It also showed how much more practice is needed to get to the speed that these boys demonstrated. Isaac, Jens, Erik and Miles can each solve a 3x3 cube in about 20 seconds. For comparison, the current Canadian record is 4.26 seconds, which ranks 14th in the world. The world record is 3.13 seconds. As fast as our visiting cubing enthusiasts are, they still have many hours of practice ahead of them before they can move into that elite level.

The exchange of knowledge and skills went both ways during the visit, as our guests were given an archery lesson on the MECCS archery course following the cubing demonstration and lesson. They began with a safety lesson to make sure there would be no accidents. Maxine Hildebrandt, our certified archery instructor, then taught them how to load their bows at the targets. Finally, they moved through the targets on our course, which include a moose, an elk, a bear and a wild turkey.