

EDUCATION

After first year, Menasha day learning center is almost 'at capacity'



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One year after [setting up its campus](#) in Menasha, [Chileda Learning Center](#) principal Rob Becker sees "a great need" for schools like his in northeast Wisconsin.

The center, a day school just off Oneida Street in Menasha, specializes in teaching students ages 5 to 21 with high-support needs. Chileda contracts with 14 public school districts that refer their students to the center. Several students travel daily from as far away as Fond du Lac and Ripon, Becker said.

After only one year in operation, 30 students are enrolled for this school year — almost "at capacity," Becker said. Chileda is licensed for 37 students and has 35 staff, including teachers, occupational therapists and direct support professionals.

The school has three classrooms for three different grade bands, each serving about 10 students. The facility includes specialized equipment, like indoor swings, larger bathrooms for students who need assistance and doors that open on a timer.

"It's grown a lot," Becker said, adding he felt "things are going well."

Chileda had programming all summer and is set to start the next school year after Labor Day, Becker said. The school took off the week before Labor Day for staff development, a facility-wide deep clean and installation of new outdoor equipment.

Becker said the equipment will help students learn life skills through cooperative play, like how to shoot baskets. The students also enjoy just being outdoors, he added, saying they struggle when the weather doesn't cooperate.

Ten volunteers from Home Depot put in a [Gaga ball pit](#), a basketball court and outdoor picnic tables Aug. 27.

"We're more than happy to help," said East Appleton Home Depot store manager Brooke Ruck. "I can't wait to see the kids playing outside."

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