

BY GAYLE VANVOOREN



## Mascot Ediot

The new school year is here, and the first day was a warm one for our students. August 23 is the earliest the doors have ever opened and it was met with some reluctance by many in our district.

I visited both schools on opening day and it seemed like everything was running smoothly. The dehumidification was working well at the public school, although it got a little warm in the lunch room, I'm told. I also feel sure that it was warm on the upper floor at St. Edward's where there is no air conditioning of any kind.

The early start of school may be hard for some to get used to. This week the State Fair begins, and many of our students will be entering livestock and other entries for competition. We are proud of the work our Westerheim and Nordland 4-H groups do each year, and the reward of the State Fair is their 'icing on the cake'.

Parents were assured that students attending the fair would not be penalized for their missing some of these first days of classes. It will be difficult for students to catch up after missing some time, but not impossible. With caring and understanding faculty, they should be up to speed in a short time.

The benefits of this early start should far outweigh the drawbacks. Testing is an important part of the puzzle that faces our kids.

They will now have more time to prepare for the tests that ultimately bring needed dollars into the school district. For failing grades means that funding can be reduced even further.

The collaboration between the 25 schools initiating this common school start has been amazing. Getting all these schools 'on the same page', with the same time periods, the same

goals, has really taken a lot of time and effort.

And, at the bottom of it all, it should be good for the kids.

Schools can now share resources, combine for important meetings to save money across the board, and use more technology to teach our students.

Really, so many things are possible.

This first year will be the learning year, and the next two should get easier. With anything, there has to be a learning and this is no different.

Our administrators and educators will have time to work out all the kinks in the program.

Education is not like it was when I grew up. I remember the one-room schoolhouse, then the consolidation of the small school districts into the main one in town.

It was a time of change, and we feared it - but it came and we all survived. We will survive this one too and maybe be better for it in the long run.