



# Harding County School District #31-1

12474 Tipperary St, Buffalo, SD 57720

*Establishing a Foundation for Future Endeavors*

## 50 Years of Opportunity — and What Comes Next

For more than five decades, Northwest Area Schools (NWS) had expanded opportunities for students across our region. By working together, rural school districts were able to offer hands-on Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that would have been difficult to sustain independently.

Today, we are sharing an important update about the future of NWS—and what it means for our students, schools, and community.

Over time, several challenges have made the current NWS (mobile units) model increasingly difficult to sustain:

- **Rising Costs:** Member district contributions have grown significantly over the years from **\$3,000** in 1973 to **\$115,000** in 2025-2026.
- **Limited Funding Sources:** NWS received no direct operational funding from the State of South Dakota.
- **Staffing Shortages:** Ongoing difficulty filling instructor positions—only 5 of the 8 units are staffed.

Because the model depends on full staffing and full district participation, these challenges have created increasing financial strain.

## End of an Era - How We Got Here

### 2023-24 School Year

- Staffing challenges intensified
- Financial sustainability concerns increase as unstaffed units reduce revenue
- Meetings held with South Dakota state representatives and Department of Education
- No additional funding sources identified or approved
- Projection made that mobile unit operations would likely cease within 2–3 years.

### January 2025

- Joint cooperative (COOP) meeting with member districts.
- Districts advised planning for approximately less than two years of remaining mobile unit operations.
- Transition planning for future CTE delivery models encouraged.

### Spring 2025

- Knowing we would need to plan for the future, we met with Toby Morris of Colliers and looked at financials and our current bond. COOP Architecture was recommended as a good company to start the process. Through these discussions and looking at original building plans, the board wanted to look at the

idea of joint projects of both the CTE and Phase II addition (multipurpose room, weight room, locker rooms).

### June 2025

- McIntosh School District votes to withdraw from NWAS Multi-District membership.

### Summer /Fall 2025

- COOP Architecture visited school and began discussions with the board and administration on CTE facility ideas and Phase II construction. Meetings and discussions continued through summer into the fall months. Meetings with work groups continue to fine tune building plans. We visited other schools and looked at buildings and plans of similar size and needs including Lyman, Wall, Lemmon, Corsica-Stickney, etc.

### October 2025

- Decision announced to **close** NWAS Multi-District at the end of the 2025–2026 school year.
- Funding shortages, staffing challenges, and loss of state CTE credit approval cited as contributing factors.
- NWAS courses to be reclassified as elective credit rather than CTE credit.

### November 2025

- Resolution adopted to dissolve NWAS Multi-District mobile unit program

### December 2025

- Resolution adopted to dissolve the Special Education (SPED) services division of NWAS Multi-District

### January 2026

- Dispersal of mobile units completed
- Harding County School District 31-1 receives the Construction Trades mobile unit from NWAS.

### February 2026

- State of South Dakota approves Harding County School District 31-1 Construction Trades program
- Program scheduled to begin Fall 2026, continuing local Career and Technical Education efforts

## What This Means

**NWAS will conclude operations at the end of the 2025–2026 school year.**

Harding County School District 31-1 is moving forward by:

- Launching a **Construction Trades program in Fall 2026 with the mobile unit we received.**
- Expanding locally supported CTE opportunities with certified staff.

## What Is This Meeting About?

As talk about the new CTE building was taking place, the board dove into the possibility of finishing Phase II of the new building. **A discussion on how this looks is the purpose of this meeting.** Looking at bonds, financial outlook, costs, etc. will be discussed.

Phase II is the addition of locker rooms, weight rooms and multi-purpose room on the southwest corner of existing building. The main building was designed with the intent of this addition.

Thought process of adding PHASE II:

- Already having a construction company on site cuts down on construction costs.
- Safety Concerns: Currently we utilize the old gym for weight training classes which means sending students down to the other building every day. Travel to and from the old school is a safety concern and we would like to keep everyone on the same campus.
- Additional locker rooms will help alleviate space issues and would help when we host post-season or conference tournaments.
- Multi-purpose room- used by wrestlers during the season, would alleviate scheduling & space challenges at the REC center; during the off season- golf, track, and PE classes when gym is being used for other purposes.
- Combining the two projects encourages more companies to bid which can mean better competition and rates.
- This would make the district one step closer to finishing the original school plans as they were conceived 15 years ago.

## Our Commitment Moving Forward

The goal remains the same as it was in 1973:

**To ensure every student—regardless of location—has access to meaningful, hands-on learning that prepares them for the future.**

The structure may change, but the commitment endures.

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## NOTICE

**Public Informational Meeting**  
**Monday, May 18, 2026**  
**6:00 PM**  
**School Gymnasium**



If you have additional questions, please contact the school, 605-375-3241.