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## University of Montana research unit aids Montana schools

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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UM RESEARCH UNIT  
AIDS MONTANA SCHOOLS

MISSOULA--

Elementary and secondary schools in Montana have long been in need of learning about and implementing educational innovations, according to Dr. Lyle L. Berg, director of the University of Montana divisions of Educational Research and Services.

Since its founding three years ago on the Missoula campus, the Division of Educational Research and Services (DERS) has helped to fill that need.

The division, part of the UM School of Education, also has assisted schools in planning for their immediate and long range needs.

DERS has worked since 1966 with more than 30 school districts in the state, recommending facility and educational program changes to improve the learning, teaching environment of Montana schools.

Educational problems faced by Montana schools vary in each district, according to Dr. Berg. The DERS usually spends several months studying an entire school district.

Such things as past and projected growth patterns within school and community are calculated. After much detailed research the division makes recommendations for school district improvement, based on research findings.

Enthusiastic about the progress that the division has made, Dr. Berg says, "Worthwhile educational changes and improvements can certainly come from competent educational planning."

Dr. Berg said the University of Montana is the first and only institution of higher learning in Montana to implement such a program. The DERS, financed in part by University funds, charges a nominal fee to individual school districts to help offset the clerical, research and travel costs necessary to conduct research studies.

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Concerning DERS studies, Dr. Berg said, "Our knowledge is doubling every decade. Today a special urgency requires those concerned with education to constantly appraise and evaluate educational change in the light of sound educational objectives."

Implementing that philosophy, the UM research unit has done extensive work to introduce flexible modular scheduling to the Montana secondary school system.

Flexible modular scheduling provides the mechanics for individually prescribed instruction, according to material printed by the research division.

Requirements of a flexible scheduling system include varying rate, depth and breadth of instructional opportunity for each student according to his own needs and capabilities; varying the size of classes--assembly classes, inquiry classes and classes for independent study; and assigning time to subjects according to their requirements for mastery.

Dr. Berg is assisted by Dr. John J. Hunt, UM associate professor of education, several graduate assistants and a number of work-study personnel. DERS also employs special consultants who work in highly specialized areas.

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