

# GREAT DIVIDE EDUCATION SERVICES

P.O. Box 48  
Deer Lodge, Montana 59722  
846-2147

## BEAVERHEAD COUNTY

Dillon #10  
Lima #12  
Wisdom #16  
Polaris #21  
Jackson # 24  
Reichle #26  
Wise River #11  
Grant #7

Great Divide Education Services is a special education cooperative that serves more than 26 elementary and high schools in southwest Montana. Our cooperative encompasses schools from "Lima to Lincoln" and covers hundreds of miles.

## GRANITE COUNTY

Drummond #11  
Drummond H.S. #2  
Granite Co. H.S.  
Hall #8  
Philipsburg #1

Great Divide is committed to, and passionate about, serving children with disabilities in these schools. Our personnel travel thousands of miles each year to ensure that special education academic services, as well as related services, such as speech and language and occupational and physical therapies, are available to students with disabilities across southwestern Montana. Great Divide's mandate also includes "Child Find:" evaluations by specialists to determine whether or not a student might have a disability.

## LEWIS AND CLARK COUNTY

Lincoln #38

**In the upcoming school year, Great Divide is looking at a budget deficit of more than \$100,000.** We have already eliminated 2 part-time positions, and we are moving our Dillon offices for reduced rent. Our vehicles are aging, with thousands of miles on the odometers.

## MADISON COUNTY

Alder #2  
Sheridan #5  
Twin Bridges #7

Recruitment and retention of high quality educators has been an ongoing dilemma, and, for Great Divide, most of our personnel are specialists with advanced degrees; therefore, these specialists' salaries are substantial. And, because of the travel requirements and multiple schools the specialists serve, our personnel are extraordinary and dedicated. The staff may not be seeing any salary increases for the upcoming year, but they will be faced with increased health insurance costs.

## POWELL COUNTY

Avon #29  
Elliston #27  
Garrison #20  
Gold Creek #33  
Helmville #15  
Ovando #11  
Powell County H.S.  
Deer Lodge Elementary #1

In order to continue to offer services to our member schools, we will need to ask for increased assessments from the schools, anywhere from 10 to 20 percent. This request will impact all students in the schools. Even with an increased assessment, the cooperative may not have necessary funds for special requests from schools when a high needs, high cost, student moves into a district after a school's budget has been set.

## SILVER BOW COUNTY

Divide #4  
Melrose #5

## DEER LODGE COUNTY

Anaconda #10

Great Divide encourages the Commission to support the proposals for increases for special education, including Cooperatives, in the upcoming legislative session.

Sincerely,

  
Silvia Mangen

Director, Great Divide Education Services