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SCHOOLS
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NETWORK

BUILDING A
BETTER ARIZONA

Arizona: The Cautionary Tale of Universal Vouchers

Who We Are

We are a network of 20,000+ education advocates across Arizona.

SOSAZ Network is a nonpartisan, community-based organization fighting for strong public schools for a stronger Arizona.

www.sosaznetwork.org



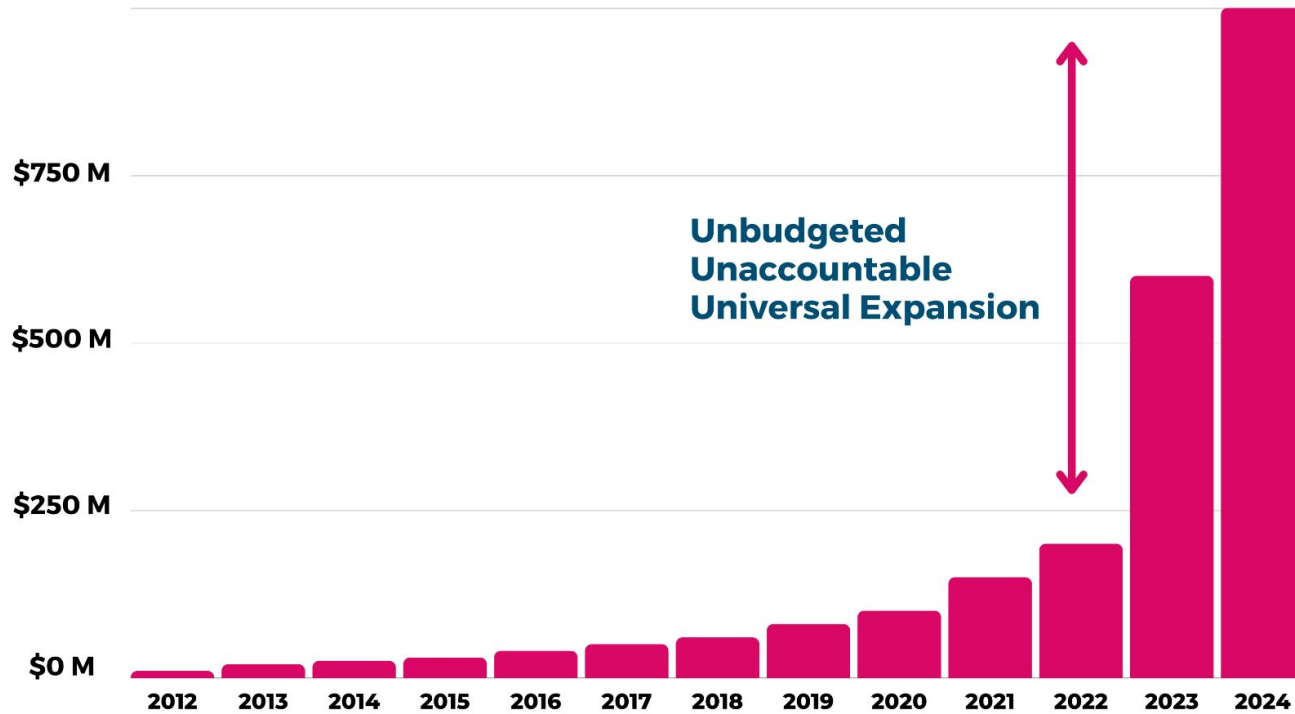


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Arizona's Universal Voucher Fiasco

SKYROCKETING ESA VOUCHER COSTS



Sources: Arizona Department of Education (2024) & Joint Legislative Budget Committee (2024)

Arizona's Universal Vouchers by the Numbers

- **Over 100,000 students enrolled** — nearly double any school district
- Costs over **\$1 billion** per year — and growing
- The average award is **\$10,000** — can be as much as **\$46,000** per student
- Now totals **12% of AZ's K-12 budget**
- **Costs nearly 2000%** more than initially projected



What ESA Vouchers Fund

- **Private school expenses.** Tuition, uniforms, club fees
- **“Educational” expenses.** Bounce houses, espresso machines, snow cone machines, home gyms, chicken coops, zoo and bounce memberships, ski trips/lessons, lingerie, diamonds
- **Private lessons.** Swim, tennis, gymnastics, karate, music, cooking, horseback riding, archery, American Ninja Warrior classes, etc.
- **Curriculum.** Anything goes!

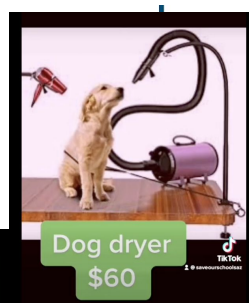
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12NEWS

ESA parents bought diamond rings, luxury clothing, and Kenmore appliances with education tax dollars

Purchases automatically approved include:

- Two 1-carat diamond rings and several necklaces.
- Kenmore washers, dryers, and a range.
- Gift cards to Kohl's and Happy Moments, which can be used at restaurants and clothing.
- Gaming laptops.




AZ's Vouchers Lack Any Accountability

- ✗ **Zero** income cap or requirements
- ✗ **Zero** requirements for accreditation or state approvals
- ✗ **Zero** curriculum standards
- ✗ **Zero** requirements for certified teachers
- ✗ **Zero** background checks or safety standards
- ✗ **Zero** requirements for academic accountability, or minimum hours/days of school
- ✗ **Zero** graduation requirements



Vouchers Hurt Public Schools

- **71%** of universal ESA voucher users were already private school students or homeschoolers — creating an *entirely new cost to the state*
- Vast majority are going to more affluent families in higher-income zip codes
- ESA vouchers do NOT expand quality school options for rural students — but DO defund rural schools



DID YOU KNOW?

Private school vouchers will divert an average of \$300,000 from every AZ public school next year.

Source: AZ Department of Education

The complex block features a pink header with the SOS ARIZONA logo and the text 'DID YOU KNOW?'. Below this, the main text is in a white box with a dark blue border, containing the statement about private school vouchers diverting funds from public schools. A source attribution is provided at the bottom of the white box.

It's Not "School Choice" – It's the School's Choice

Who is Benefitting?

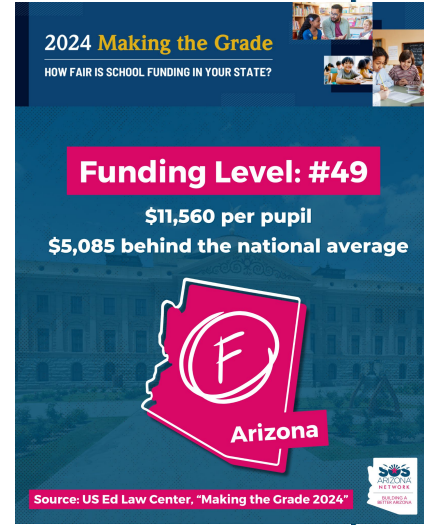
- ✓ Higher income households
- ✓ Those were already enrolled in private school or homeschooling
- ✓ Whiter, more suburban households
- ✓ Private schools and unregulated pop-up schools

Who Misses Out?

- ✗ Students in low income areas, BIPOC students
- ✗ Students in public district and charter schools
- ✗ LGBTQ students, ELL students, students with disabilities
- ✗ Rural students

Meanwhile... the State of Public Schools in AZ

- ❑ Per-pupil funding is **48th** in the US
- ❑ **2nd most crowded** class sizes in the US
- ❑ AZ's teacher salaries rank in the **bottom 5** across the US → teacher retention crisis
- ❑ Student-to-counselor ratio **2nd worst** in US
- ❑ Court recently ruled AZ's public school facilities are **\$7B behind in funding** since 2000



Vouchers Hurt Public Schools



EDUCATION

EDUCATION

This Phoenix-area school close more than 1/3 of it



Erick Trevino
Arizona Republic

Sept. 18, 2025 Updated Sept. 24, 2025, 2:50 p.m. MT



Amphi planned ahead of 2025

Tucson-area school district budget cuts

Posted Oct 2, 2025, 1:04 pm

Mia Kortright
TucsonSentinel.com



The Paradise Valley Unified School District enrollment numbers decline.

Advertisement



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NEW AT 9

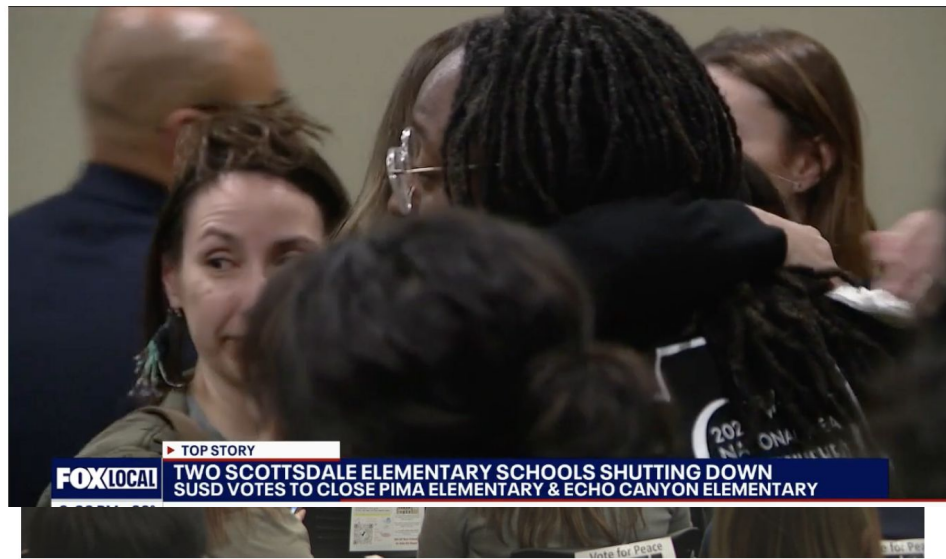
TENSE MEETING OVER ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SHUTTING DOWN

LATEST NEWS RUMP CHOOSES TV DOCTOR MEHMET

Century School Board

Scottsdale school board approves closures of 2 schools

By Nicole Krusean and Sara Filips | Published December 9, 2025 8:27pm MST | Education | FOX 10 Phoenix |



TOP STORY

FOX LOCAL 10

TWO SCOTTSDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS SHUTTING DOWN
SUSD VOTES TO CLOSE PIMA ELEMENTARY & ECHO CANYON ELEMENTARY

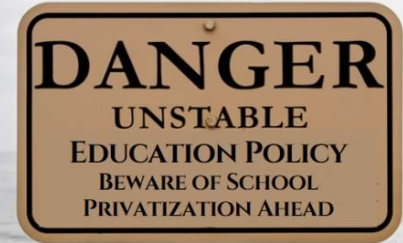
Roosevelt Elementary School District held a board meeting on Tuesday to hear parent concerns about possibly closing schools due to a \$5

What's the End Game?

- Privatizing public education.
- Billionaire-backed special interests have pushed voucher programs across the US in order to convert our free, accessible public school system into a for-profit model that can pick and choose students — and prevent a unionized teacher force
- Project 2025 carries out the plan



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Moving Forward

- Once vouchers are introduced in a state, there is no stopping, no compromise
- Voucher lobbying orgs will stop at nothing to continue expanding – MUST stop it in its tracks at the outset
- The goal is the full scale privatization of education and dismantling of public education
- Never a better time to **stand strong and unite around local public schools** - shore up your ed champions on both sides of the aisle



AZ Ballot Measure to Reform Universal Vouchers

- A coalition of parents and educators, represented by SOSAZ (C4) & the Arizona Education Association, have filed language to rein in the ESA voucher program in our state
- 256,000 valid signatures by July 2, 2026
- Will require tremendous organizing and people power and will create a blueprint for other states — a historic step for the future of education in America

