

Fiction

ESA's Only Benefit Wealthy, Urban Students

"More proof that Arizona's universal voucher scam is designed to benefit the rich." [xvii]

Key Facts

- **Lower-income, nonwhite students struggle the most in the traditional District school system:** Nonwhite and low-income students have lower graduation rates, receive more suspensions and expulsions, and generally perform worse than their peers in the traditional District school system. [xviii]
- **Novel education options – like micro schools – are cheaper and more diverse than the traditional private school system.** While the space has grown rapidly since the pandemic, its decentralized nature makes data sparse. However, evidence suggests these schools are significantly cheaper and much more diverse than traditional private schools. [xix]
- **Black Mother's Forum – just one small Arizona microschool - operates two locations that have served over 150 students since 2021; 100% use ESA, 90% are nonwhite, and most are low-income. According to the Forums CEO, without the universal ESA program, these schools would not exist.**
- **Based on a review of ESA and Census data, CSI estimates half or more of ESA recipients homeschool or microschool.** While private school households earn more than public school households, homeschool households earn even less on average than public school families. [xx] CSI estimates this population makes up about half of all ESA recipients. [xxi]
- **Based on ESA enrollment data, the proportion of rural vs non-rural students who use an ESA is nearly identical (4.5% non-rural vs. 4.3% rural).** [xxii] Rural households are more likely to homeschool than urban families.
- **Most school-aged kids are in the suburbs and higher-income ZIP codes:** Claims about ESA families that don't account for this may not be reliable. Half of all kids live in the wealthiest third of Arizona ZIP codes. The bottom half of Arizona ZIP codes by household income have only a third of all kids.

B O T T O M L I N E

Since the pandemic, demand for traditional District public schools has fallen nationwide – among broad demographic groups. ESA's help satisfy that demand but they do not create it. For micro schools especially, evidence suggests the demand is often coming from minority and lower-income families.