

Laurie Roberts, in the [Arizona Republic](#): A state board has rejected the ridiculous notion of Arizona taxpayers shelling out for dune buggies in the state's Empowerment Scholarship Account program. But how did it get this far?

Arizona is a state in which state officials venerate privatization of public schools. The Ohio voucher/anti-public-school CAUCUS seems to follow the Arizona playbook.

One of the Arizona voucher schemes is the Education Savings Accounts (ESA's). This concept provides tax money for parents to spend on anything they, within broad limits permitted by the government, want to use the funds for. In Arizona, according to the [article](#), kayaks, \$900 Lego sets, ski passes, ninja training, espresso machines, trampoline sessions, and Broadway tickets are allowable under state guidelines. However, the State Board of Education rejected an appeal to allow dune buggies. The dune buggies purchaser was able to get initial approval with the help of an occupational therapist who testified that her kids learn better after a "trek through the desert..."

Save Our Schools Arizona points to more than \$100 million in non-educational spending approved in Arizona without any academic justification.

Ohio taxpayers should be warning their legislative representatives about this kind of taxpayer rip off.

Dune buggy boondoggle shows a crying need for better school voucher oversight

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[Laurie Roberts](#)

Arizona Republic

Good news for taxpayers, especially the ones who think public money ought to go to public schools.

The state is [drawing the line](#) at paying for dune buggies.

Kayaks, apparently, still are allowed as an acceptable educational expense under the state's universal school voucher program, as are [\\$900 Lego sets](#), trampoline sessions, Broadway tickets and espresso machines.

But isn't it nice to know we absolutely are digging in our heels at the ridiculous notion of taxpayers shelling out for dune buggies?

So far, anyway.

Dune buggies fail the 'reasonableness' test

The Arizona State Board of Education on Monday rejected a parent's appeal to use her kids' state school Empowerment Scholarship Accounts to buy three dune buggies.

"At some point, I think the question of reasonableness comes to mind," Board President Daniel Corr said, in voting to order the woman to pay for her own darn dune buggies.

If you're inclined to reply, "duh," know that Monday's vote overturns the ruling of an appeal hearing officer who recommended that we foot the bill for the buggies.

And the Department of Education, which at first denied the expense then approved it — "mistakenly," it claims.

DOE in March suspended the family's school voucher accounts and requested reimbursement for the dune buggies, prompting the mother to appeal and decry "crass incompetence."

“Telling us months later that we have to pay back something that was approved by the department has to be illegal in 50 states and a few territories,” she wrote in the appeal.

Yeah, and trying to sucker the state into paying for dune buggies ought to be galling in 50 states and more than a few territories.

Arizona's system worked on ESAs, but it's a first

In this case, the system worked ... so far. Though I've got to wonder how a dune buggy ever got approved in the first place.

And how the state plans to recover our money.

According to The Arizona Republic's Nick Sullivan, the parent got an occupational therapist to testify that her kids learn better after a trek through the desert, allowing them “to engage in movement before returning to more traditional learning environments.”

The way to fix ESAs: [Is to vote GOP lawmakers out](#)

So, buy kids some bikes. With your own funds, not ours.

Or take them to the park.

Save Our Schools Arizona has been sounding the alarm about the state's runaway ESA program all year, pointing to more than \$100 million in non-educational spending approved without any academic justification.

Curiously, those fiscal hawks over at the Legislature had no concerns.

Vouchers shouldn't leave taxpayers high and dry

Fortunately, Attorney General Kris Mayes does.

In July, she [opened an investigation](#) into the ESA program. Specifically, into Superintendent Tom Horne's well-used rubber stamp — the one his department employs to approve “supplemental” educational expenses like \$900 Lego sets and ninja training and ski passes.

Jenny Clark, an ESA parent who runs an organization to help parents get vouchers and was appointed by then-Gov. Doug Ducey to the state Board of Education, cast the only vote Monday to approve the dune buggy boondoggle. She noted that it's the first time since she joined the board in 2022 that it has rejected a hearing officer's recommendation in a voucher appeal.

Corr, meanwhile, indicated the parent could appeal the board's decision.

If ever there was a case that illustrates the need for better oversight of ESAs — something the Republican-run Legislature refuses to consider — surely, this is it.

It shouldn't have taken a trip all the way to the state Board of Education to declare that you don't need a recreational vehicle to chase down a good education.

Yet, there it is. We taxpayers footed the bill for dune buggies.

Reach Roberts at laurie.roberts@arizonarepublic.com. Follow her on X (formerly Twitter) at [@LaurieRobertsaz](https://twitter.com/LaurieRobertsaz) and on Threads at [@LaurieRobertsaz](https://www.threads.net/@LaurieRobertsaz).