

NORTHWESTnews

Dan Ryan has challenged the typical belief that parents are on their own in raising kids. Ryan, who is gay and childless, has an 18-year commitment to working on issues relevant to education and queer causes.

Ryan works as development director of Portland State University, serves on the Small Schools Council, was on the grant committee for the Oregon Safe Schools Initiative and has participated in volunteer teaching. He helped launch the Gay Straight Alliance at Roosevelt High School (his alma mater), trained teachers about homophobia and facilitated a monthly Freshman Forum.

Today, he is busy earning votes for Zone 4 of the Portland Public Schools board.

Jaymee R. Cuti: What sparked your passion for public service?

Dan Ryan: I was conditioned for public service at a very young age. I was raised a culturally liberal Catholic. My mom took us to places like soup kitchens to work. I volunteered for political campaigns, and I was president of my 4-H Club.

In 24 hours, you have eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep and eight hours of free time. With that free time, you should devote some of that to service, especially if you don't have the responsibility of raising children.

JRC: What has prepared you for the school board?

DR: Working in the nonprofit sector for over 18 years, I've often staffed boards of directors. That gives me a lot of insight. Being a product of the Portland Public Schools prepares me. Being a fourth-generation Oregonian prepares me. Volunteering at Roosevelt High School

PRIME FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

School board candidate proves parents aren't alone

by Jaymee R. Cuti

these last eight years prepares me because I have firsthand insight of what it's like for a teen-age kid who is attending a school with challenges. It's a school that predominately doesn't have much parental support, with a lot of English language learners and some very hardworking parents—many times single parents that do not have time to get involved in school because they're just trying to survive.

JRC: What have you learned about the campaigning?

DR: That you put yourself out there like never before, and the reward of that is you're exposed to a lot of intelligent people that are extremely passionate about this city and our public schools. I'm convinced more than ever that we're going to figure this out. We want to have the strongest urban public school system in the country, and we've all got to get behind this effort. It's the most important, No. 1 thing for our economy.

JRC: Why would someone without kids have an interest in public schools?

DR: 75 percent of the voters and taxpayers are in that category. To me, the most important public resource we support is the school system. These are people who are going to be your future neighbors, employers and employees. This is our future. Nothing is more important.

JRC: What should schools do differently if they have more funding?

DR: We need to have more instructional time in front of students, meaning smaller classes, more teacher-to-student contact. You want to give teachers freedom from drowning in paperwork and the students focused on rigorous and exciting curriculum. Learning is fun. When you match the students up to a passionate teacher, the work is being done.

JRC: What are your creative funding solutions?

DR: Clearly we have to raise the level of state support. There's a concentrated effort to get \$5.4 billion statewide. We cannot allow class sizes to grow and school years to be cut. It's time to come up with a long-term, stable solution.

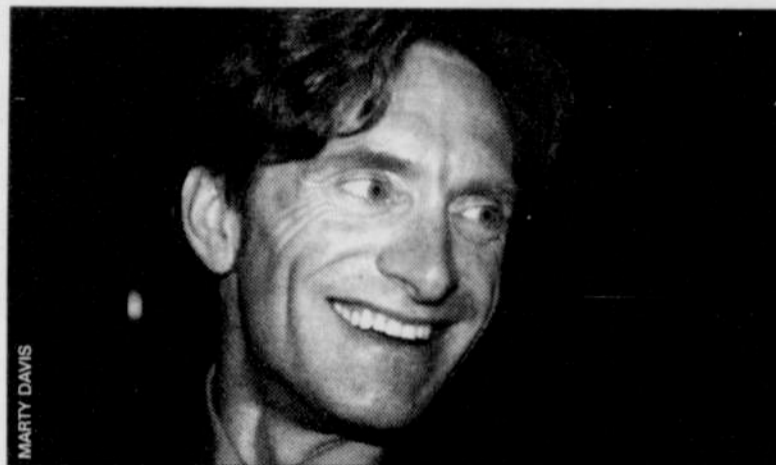
JRC: What are the top three problems facing Portland Public Schools?

DR: We need to make certain to gain parents' trust so they continue to send their kids to neighborhood schools. We need to celebrate the many success stories: The North/Northeast cluster itself is led by the most inspirational leaders I've seen, and I'm also seeing younger families visiting with their principal because they're

going to give their neighborhood school a shot. I want to encourage the capture rate for schools in North/Northeast Portland to increase during my tenure.

Accountability to voters is the second issue. As a board member, I will make certain that our policies and budget are transparent to voters. There's nothing to hide.

Finally, I will stay focused on the achievement gap. All children have the potential to



Dan Ryan enjoys himself at the Oregonians Against Discrimination Luncheon.

learn. There's nothing more important than installing all day kindergartens and pre-K in low-performing clusters. Then you have very intensive reading programs. From there, a child has the opportunity to excel in all subjects. It's important to have principals that are culturally competent and to inspire and train teachers to have that same degree of cultural competency. No one should ever look at a child and make assumptions on how they can learn. **JRC**

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