



NORMAN MESSMAN for the Emerald
 Columnist for The Washington Post, William Raspberry spoke about parents beginning a child's education at home, in the EMU Friday.

Writer says students must believe to learn

By Rebecca Merritt
 Oregon Daily Emerald

The American school system is only failing the children who believe they can't learn, syndicated columnist William Raspberry said Friday.

"American schools unstructured and unreformed are doing a pretty good job of educating the children coming to school ready to learn," Raspberry told an EMU Ballroom crowd of about 500. "There's a misconception that schools are failing all children."

Raspberry, who writes about educational and social issues for *The Washington Post*, said one of the greatest problems with the American school system can be solved at home.

Students — particularly poor children from inner cities or rural areas — need to be taught by their parents that they are capable of learning and that it's important they learn, he said.

Children in the bottom half of their class must stop using economic or class deficits as an excuse for their underachievement, Raspberry said. Students also need to overcome the notion that only the children labeled as

smart by their teachers and peers can be successful.

"We need to let them know that you don't have to be a genius to do well," he said. "People of average intelligence can achieve success if they will only work at it."

Raspberry said that according to Gerald Bracey, only the bottom half of American school classes fails to meet international academic standards. The top 20 percent of American students have outscored the top 20 percent of Japanese students, while the upper 50 percent of students in American classes scores as well or better than the top 50 percent of Japanese classes, he said.

However, American children in the bottom half of their class fall far behind the upper half, while the lower half of Japanese students don't score that far behind the top half.

Raspberry said the bottom half of American students don't meet academic standards because they aren't ready to learn and believe they aren't expected to learn. Parents don't know how to prepare their children for learning and need to be educated, he said.

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