Librarians need to develop different strategies when dealing with humor programs for children who are beyond the preschool and primary ages. This section will demonstrate how to create story programs for older students using the traditional story program format, special events, and theme parties.

**TRADITIONAL STORY PROGRAM FORMAT**

Intermediate school-age children will attend library story programs if they are called anything but “story programs.” The term has too many connotations to preschool story programs. If you run a series of story programs for intermediate school-age children, give it a snappy name, such as The Crazy Club or Razzle-Dazzle Drop-In. Advertise heavily at the elementary schools. Mention in your fliers that younger children will not be allowed to attend. They will scare away the target audience—I speak from experience.

When planning this type of library program, follow a format similar to the traditional preschool story program. Add more oral storytelling or read-aloud selections from chapter books. It’s okay to sneak in a few picture books once in a while. Many picture books today are being written for this age group. Make sure your program theme appeals to this age group. The model program School Daze takes advantage of the many excellent resources that feature school, students, and teachers.
## SCHOOL DAZE

### Lesson Plan at a Glance

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<th><strong>POEM</strong></th>
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<td>The Toll-Bridge Troll by Patricia Rae Wolff</td>
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<td><strong>SONG</strong></td>
<td>“I Don’t Want to Go to School” by Barry Louis Polisar from the recording Teacher’s Favorites</td>
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<td><strong>POEM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ORAL STORY</strong></td>
<td>“Sarah’s Story” by Bill Harley from the recording Come on Out and Play</td>
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### Preparation and Presentation

**POEM**


Little Peggy Ann McKay recites a litany of ailments from “purple bumps” to “a hole inside my ear.” Then she learns that “today is . . . Saturday?”

Memorize this poem and act it out on a table with a blanket. Start out prone and quiet. Slowly get up as you recite the lines louder and louder. By the time you reach the punch line, you should be standing.

**ORAL STORY**


A young boy, headed for school, outwits a troll by asking a series of rid-
dles. When the troll is tricked for the third time, he winds up going to school with the boy.

This is one of my all-time favorite stories to tell, and it’s more fun without the book because I’m free to use my whole body when explaining the riddles. Keep a penny and a nickel in your pocket for the third riddle.

**SONG**


Tommy tells his mother that he doesn’t want to go to school because “no one likes me there” and “the children there are not nice.” The punch line reveals that Tommy is the school’s principal. This recording has other humorous school songs, such as “I’ve Got a Teacher, She’s So Mean.” The recording can be purchased on Polisar’s web site: www.barrylou.com.

**POEM**


This long story poem describes a six-foot-eight substitute teacher who knocks the door off its hinges and makes the school bully wet his pants. By the end of the day, the children are praying for the health of their regular classroom teacher.

**PICTURE BOOK**


All of the students are excited about picture day except Josephina Caroleena Wattsheena the First. She’s more interested in repairing a gear shaft, the pencil sharpener, and the sprinkler and heating systems. Her messing about gets everyone filthy for their pictures. The day is saved when Josephina fixes the photographer’s broken camera. Delight in the language: “Everyone, say cheesy wheezy, if you pleasly.”

**READ-ALOUD**


The first chapter of this volume is my favorite of all the Junie B. Jones series. The school photographer gets “fusstation” in him when Junie B.
doesn't cooperate. He winds up taking her picture while she's making a funny face. Her friend Lucille comments that “the camera is my friend,” and Paulie Allen Puffer tries to convince Junie B. that the drool on her pillow is from the monster that lives under her bed.

PICTURE BOOK
Moira invites the whole school to her birthday party. The audience will chime in when she says, “. . . aaaaaand kindergarten.”

POEM
The narrator would rather take baths with sharks, pet porcupines, and eat liver and spinach than do homework. This poem can also be found in the book *I Thought I'd Take My Rat to School: Poems for September to June*, edited by Dorothy M. Kennedy (Little, Brown, 1993).

ORAL STORY
Sarah is upset about her storytelling homework. On the way to school, she enters an ant colony and a beehive. This is a fun, animated story to tell. Even though a picture book version is available (Tricycle Press, 1996), the kids will get more out of the story if you memorize it. Harley has other school-related storytelling and music recordings available on his web site: www.billharley.com. Titles include: *Cool in School* (Round River, 1987); *From the Back of the Bus* (Round River, 1995); *Lunchroom Tales: A Natural History of the Cafetorium* (Round River, 1996).

ADDITIONAL HUMOROUS BOOKS ABOUT SCHOOL
Troublemakers Spud and Joe head off to school with their supplies of spitballs, stink bombs, and Joe's pet tarantula. They run into their new


Thomas refuses to wear his new brown snowsuit. His teacher tells him to put it on, but Thomas says, “NNNNNO.” After a struggle, his teacher winds up wearing the snowsuit and her dress ends up on Thomas. Then the principal arrives. . . .


Axle Annie is a bus driver who never fails to get the kids to school, even in the worst blizzards. This makes life miserable for Shifty Rhodes, another bus driver, who desperately wants school to be closed for a snow day. One day, the radio announces the school closings and mentions that only one school remains open, and that’s—“‘Don't say Burskyville!’ pleaded Shifty. ‘Burskyville,’ said the radio.”


Mrs. Toggle’s winter coat zipper gets stuck because the “thingamajig is missing from my zipper.” The students try their best to pull her coat off, as does the school nurse and principal. The custodian finally comes up with a simple solution. Sequels: Mrs. Toggle and the Dinosaur (Simon & Schuster, 1991); Mrs. Toggle's Beautiful Blue Shoe (Simon & Schuster, 1991).

SPECIAL EVENTS

Library programs billed as special events will often succeed in drawing both the regular library users and the kids who rarely visit the library. As long as the topic is intriguing, non-library users will take the time to find out what all the fuss is about. Once again, humor could be that draw. Many special events are planned around holidays and library campaigns, such as National Children’s Book Week and Read Across America. The sample program Boo Ha-Ha! is aimed at children in grades 3-5 and combines humor with a yearly Halloween ghost stories session.
**Boo Ha-Ha!**

Publicize this event as being only for grades 3-5. “Younger children will be turned away at the door.” This little negative statement, usually a no-no for library publicity, can actually attract the target audience.

**ROOM DECORATIONS**
Decorate the program area with a haunted-house setting, complete with fake cobwebs, jack-o’-lanterns, and dim lighting. In the past, I’ve had some of the best room decorations created by local scout troops. Set up a table with a colorful assortment of Halloween goodies for refreshments.

**ACTIVITIES**
Set up another table near the refreshments for the popular game “Dead Man’s Brains.” Line up a series of small boxes. Cut a hole in each box, big enough so that kids can put their hands inside, but small enough so that they can’t see what’s inside. Place one of the following items in each box and label the boxes: Brains (really a fresh tomato), Eyes (two peeled grapes), Nose (chicken bone or small raw carrot), Ear (dried apricot), Hand (rubber glove filled with ice), Heart (raw liver), Blood (bowl of ketchup thinned with warm water), and The Worms That Ate Everything Else (cooked spaghetti noodles). Have a staff person or volunteer stand nearby so that the kids won’t pull the items out of the boxes and start flinging them at each other. Again, I speak from experience.

Once everyone is settled, the storyteller, who should be dressed for the occasion, perhaps as a funeral director, can choose from a variety of humorous ghost stories.

**SOURCES**


Baltuck has the best version of the traditional favorite known as “Red Lips.” A scary visitor appears over the course of three nights and mumbles, “Do you know what I can do with these long, long fingers and these red, red lips?” For the punch line, the storyteller drums her fingers on her lips and goes “Bub-bub-bub-bub-bub.” I usually change the story around to tell it in the first person as if it happened to me as a child.

Kids love this story even though they've probably heard it a zillion times. There are many picture book versions on the market. I happen to like DePaola's artwork, even though this is an easy story to memorize and share without the book. Practice telling the story several times to get the timing down. When I say the final line, “Take it!” I not only increase my volume, I also lower my pitch. This adds to the comedy since the line is spoken by a little old lady. It helps to make the kids jump, too.


This book contains lighthearted versions of the traditional favorites “Taily-Po” and “The Viper,” as well as several monster knock-knock jokes, riddles, and tongue twisters.


Most of the stories in this collection aren't humorous, but MacDonald has a nice variation of “Bear Hunt” called “Let's Go on a Ghost Hunt.” This activity will be a good chance to move around between stories. Even the older kids will get into it.


Here's a good picture book to share with this age group. A creepy narrator reads several short, classic, traditional, not-so-scary, “scary” stories and jokes. He also shows the reader something so horrible you'll need to call your mommy (a plate of mixed vegetables). The narrator's dog adds to the fun by holding up a sign that warns the reader to stop reading.


The book's macabre humor is best demonstrated in the traditional story “The Green Ribbon.” The female protagonist's head falls off when her husband unties the green ribbon around her neck. Bring a prop doll with a detachable head for the visual punch. Don't forget to tie a green ribbon around the doll's neck. The short poem “In the Graveyard” also always gets a laugh. Chant it as a quiet, mournful tune that will lull the audience before the big scream at the end.
This extremely popular collection of scary stories contains several humorous stories, such as “The Viper,” “The Hearse Song,” “The Slithery-Dee,” “The Ghost with the Bloody Fingers,” “Old Woman All Skin and Bone,” and “The Attic,” in which the main character screams long and loud because he steps on a nail. Surprisingly, the story that gets the most laughs for me is “Me Tie Dough-Ty Walker.” A boy and his dog spend the night in a haunted house. A voice outside chants the title phrase. The dog replies, “Lynchee kinchy colly molly dingo dingo.” The kids in the audience find that hysterical. Eventually, a head falls down the chimney, the dog dies of fright, the head slowly turns toward the boy, and the storyteller jumps at someone in the audience and screams, “AAAAAAAAH!”

The next volume in Schwartz’s series has a section of humorous scary stories titled “The Last Laugh.” “The Brown Suit” describes a gross mix-up at a funeral parlor. “Bad News” is the funniest story because it contains a good news/bad news setup. A guy dies and returns to his friend as a ghost. The good news is that they play baseball in heaven. The bad news is that the living friend is scheduled to pitch tomorrow.

This collection also has a humor section titled “Whoooooo?” Stories include “Stranger,” “Is Something Wrong,” “It’s Him,” and “T-H-U-P-P-P-P-P,” a story similar to “Red Lips.” In this story, the ghost puts its fingers in its ears, sticks out its tongue, and makes a raspberry noise.

This collection contains versions of several popular ghost stories, such as “Stop That Coffin,” “Red Velvet Ribbon,” and “Rap . . . Rap . . . Rap!”

A section titled “Laugh Yourself to Death” contains versions of “The Viper” and “Bony Fingers,” a version of “Red Lips.” The funniest stories include “The Skeleton in the Closet,” in which several kids and a janitor find the skeletal remains of the 1954 Hide-and-Seek Champion, and
“Bloody Fingers,” in which a ghoul chases a kid. When he reaches the kid, he yells, “Tag! You’re it!”

I adapt this story into a long narrative set in the library. I tell the kids I was working late, long after everyone else left. The ghoul chased me all over the stacks, the children’s room, the bathrooms, and the offices. It gives me a chance, as the storyteller, to run around before clapping my hand on someone and saying the ghoul’s punch line.

Sprinkle the program with poems, jokes, and riddles. Here are a few sources:


**THEME PARTIES**

Many libraries have had great success hosting Harry Potter theme parties at their libraries. Kids come dressed like characters from the books, and the library staff has related decorations, activities, and perhaps refreshments.

Librarians can use the same approach for theme parties based on humorous children’s books. Begin by looking through the books to collect ideas that can be translated into party decorations and activities. Included are theme party outlines for the Wayside School series by Louis Sachar, the Captain Underpants series by Dav Pilkey, and the Time Warp Trio series by Jon Scieszka.

**Wayside School Party**

Wayside School was erroneously built thirty stories high, one classroom stacked on top of another. The stories in the Wayside School series are based on Mrs. Jewls’s classroom located on the thirtieth floor.

The Wayside books by Louis Sachar are: *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* (Knopf, 1978); *Wayside School Is Falling Down* (Lothrop, 1989);
ROOM DECORATIONS

Since you probably don’t have free access to a thirty-story building, you can reenact the tall school in a single-floor space by hanging a few signs that read Left Side Up and Right Side Down. Hang a sign that reads Today’s Special: Mushroom Surprise. Label the doors Goozack.

Place a large sheet of paper on the wall or a blackboard if you have one. Write the word Discipline on the board. Leave space for kids in the know to write their names and place a check mark, or circle their names. If you need to know why, read the books.

REFRESHMENTS

Serve apples. Mrs. Gorf turns her students into apples before turning into one herself in the first chapter of the first Wayside book. Serve “baloneos.” These are Oreo cookies with pieces of bologna in place of the white stuff in the middle. Have regular Oreo cookies on hand for the squeamish and the sensible. Fill a coffee container with Tootsie Roll Pops. Mrs. Jewls usually has such a container on her desk to reward students for their behavior and “correct” answers.

ACTIVITIES

Have the children write their names on name tags as they arrive. When everyone is assembled, tell them to switch name tags with another person, much like Mrs. Jewls’s students did when they had a substitute teacher.

Make PA announcements as Principal Kidswatter. You can welcome the kids with your own script or you can use Principal Kidswatter’s hilarious lines from chapter 2 of Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger. Read the section from the first chapter of this book that starts with the sentence “But before you enter, you should know something about Wayside School.” It will explain the whole nonsense of there not being a nineteenth floor and all.

Next, lead the kids in a sing-along of “Wayside School Is Falling Down” to the tune of “London Bridge Is Falling Down.” The new words can be found in chapter 11 of Wayside School Is Falling Down.

Read three or four of your favorite chapters from the Wayside School books. My favorites are “Paul” from Sideways Stories from Wayside School, “A
Package for Mrs. Jewls” from Wayside School Is Falling Down, and “Poetry” from Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger. Instruct the kids to yell “Boo” when you finish each story, as they do when Louis the Yard Teacher tells stories.

Have the library staff act out a skit based on chapter 24 of Sideways Stories from Wayside School. Place two staff members on one side of your program area. They will act as Mrs. Jewls and a student named Dameon. Place a third staff member on the other side of the room to play Louis the Yard Teacher. Mrs. Jewls asks Dameon to run down all thirty floors and ask Louis if he’d like to watch a movie with the class. Louis asks which movie. Dameon runs up the thirty floors. Mrs. Jewls tells him. He runs down the thirty floors. Louis asks another question. Dameon runs back and forth several times. You can simulate Dameon running up and down by having the actor run in place and slowly creep from one end of the room to the other. Of course, Dameon soon runs out of breath. In the end, Mrs. Jewls informs him that the movie is already over.

Host a spelling contest. In the Wayside books, the children somehow spell synonyms of the words they’re given to spell. When asked to spell “tired,” one student recited, “Tired. S-L-E-E-P-Y. Tired.” Another student was presented with “package.” “Package. B-O-X. Package.” After sharing these examples, hand your party-goers a thesaurus and have them spell a synonym for each word you give them.

Play “Pin the Pigtail on Leslie.” In all three books, Paul torments poor Leslie for having pigtails. He always wants to pull them. Put up a poster with the back of Leslie’s head drawn in. Blindfold the students and have them try to pin her pigtails to their correct location.

Create a jump-rope area. Post the words to the jump-rope chant listed in chapter 16 of Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger on the wall. Post another piece of paper on the wall and encourage your kids to name Mrs. Jewls’s baby. Get them started by reading the names suggested in the book: Rainbow Sunshine, Bucket Head, Jet Rocket, and Cootie Face. Have a staff person write down the new names.

**Captain Underpants Party**

Dav Pilkey’s Captain Underpants books are very popular and controversial in some communities. This particular theme is for the brave, but here’s a plan that’s guaranteed to attract a crowd that comes dressed in the spirit of the event.
The Captain Underpants books are: *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* (Scholastic, 1997); *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (Scholastic, 1999); *Captain Underpants and the Invasion of the Incredibly Naughty Cafeteria Ladies from Outer Space* (Scholastic, 1999); *Captain Underpants and the Perilous Plot of Professor Poopypants* (Scholastic, 2000); *Captain Underpants and the Wrath of the Wicked Wedgie Woman* (Scholastic, 2001); *The Captain Underpants Extra-Crunchy Book O’ Fun* (Scholastic, 2001).

**ROOM DECORATIONS**
Decorate the program area in the school colors: gray and dark gray. Place a Today’s Menu sign on one wall. Cut several pieces of poster board and write weird words and phrases on each one. Put tape on the back of the pieces so that the kids can arrange them to create weird cafeteria offerings. Look through the Captain Underpants books for key words such as *fried, baked, octopus, eyeballs, and slime.*

**REFRESHMENTS**
For treats, serve Mr. Krupp’s Krispy Krupcakes (any kind of cupcake) and Anti-Evil Zombie Nerd Juice (any kind of juice).

**ACTIVITIES**
As the kids enter the area, have them fill out name tags with the new silly names they received from Professor Poopypants’s Name Change-O-Chart. The chart can be found in both *Captain Underpants and the Perilous Plot of Professor Poopypants* and *The Captain Underpants Extra-Crunchy Book O’ Fun*. Kids will be instructed to follow a formula that transforms their names into new, silly names. By following the chart, for example, my name, Rob Reid, becomes Loopy Gizzardbuns. My editor’s name, Karen Young, becomes Flunky Gorillapants, and my good friend, David Stoeri, becomes Gidget Pizzalips. Dav Pilkey’s own name becomes Gidget Hamsterbrains.

*The Captain Underpants Extra-Crunchy Book O’ Fun* contains several puzzles that can be reproduced for the event as well as a Mad-Lib story that participants can fill in as a group.

Hold a demonstration of a volcano powered by baking soda and vinegar, similar to the volcano in *Captain Underpants and the Invasion of the Incredibly*
Humor Programs for Intermediate School-Age Children

Naughty Cafeteria Ladies from Outer Space. You can also make green slime mentioned in the same book. Instructions for making volcanoes and slime can be found in several science experiment books and web sites.

Since the two main characters in the Captain Underpants books are always drawing comics, you may want to invite an art teacher or local cartoonist to give a demonstration. A similar activity would be for participants to make their own flip books. Instructions can be found in The Captain Underpants Extra-Crunchy Book O’ Fun. Pilkey’s web site, www.pilkey.com, contains more games, jokes, and drawing activities.

Cap off the party by reading selections from the Captain Underpants books.

The Time Warp Trio Party

Jon Scieszka’s Time Warp Trio features three boys who travel back and forth in time with the aid of a magical book.

The Time Warp Trio series, published by Viking, includes: Knights of the Kitchen Table (1991); The Not-So-Jolly Roger (1991); The Good, the Bad, and the Goofy (1992); Your Mother Was a Neanderthal (1993); 2095 (1995); Tut, Tut (1996); Summer Reading Is Killing Me (1998); It’s All Greek to Me (1999); See You Later, Gladiator (2000); Sam Samurai (2001).

PUBLICITY

Publicize the event as a costume party. Invite the kids to dress up as characters from the many time periods featured in the series. These include early humans, ancient civilizations (Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, Roman), European medieval times, pirates, cowboys/cowgirls, futuristic costumes, and costumes of characters in popular children’s books.

ACTIVITIES

Set up stations to represent each of the books. Have an appropriate activity or refreshment at each station. Several of the books feature stunts the boys play, such as the Powerbroom trick from The Good, the Bad, and the Goofy. Use these stunts as activities at the stations. The Knights of the Kitchen Table station can have a black knight piñata since the boys strike the black knight with a stick in the book. At the Not-So-Jolly Roger station you can provide directions for a library treasure hunt or simply pass out coconut pieces or
candy wrapped in gold foil. Have marker and paper for kids to create their own cave drawings at the Your Mother Was a Neanderthal station. Have kids at the 2095 station write down predictions for the future and put them in a time capsule. Brainstorm other activities and treats to use at the other stations.

Place a book decorated as The Book in the center of the room. Descriptions can be found in several Time Warp Trio books. When the children leave one station, they have to go to the center of the room, touch The Book, and “transport” to another station.

Since the boys in the book use magic as their means of transportation, and since one of the boys has a magician for an uncle, a performance by a magician is a perfect way to end the program.