

## **From the Ruzuku blog (formerly Another Step Forward)**

Interview with founder Rick Cecil, Fall 2009 – Part 2 of 2

I was thinking about what I wanted to do next and had this thought: "Wouldn't it be cool to go and sit in my old classrooms?" And then I thought, "Well, why not?"

I spent the fall of 2008 in my old classrooms, not only to make peace with my past relationship with school, but to see what's going on now in schools, and how could I make it different in my own education work.

I arranged to start kindergarten on the very first day of kindergarten in August of last year. From there, I spent a week at each grade level. I'd sit in the classroom with the kids and just do whatever they did.

I blogged about it. I started [www.reschoolyourself.com](http://www.reschoolyourself.com), where I captured what I was doing in the classrooms and I encouraged other people to talk about their school memories and their thoughts about education.

The kids were great. The little kids were just happy to have a big playmate.

In middle school, the kids wondered why I was there when I didn't have to be. I remember walking into some sixth grade classes a few times and I would get this cheer, "Melia!" I was like, "Wow, I wish I had this kind of reception everywhere I went."

The high school students pretty much ignored me. In college, I blended in really well because everyone is of different ages and people are more independent. The teachers sometimes announced me and I had to say a little thing about my project, but for the most part, I got to be invisible.

The most exciting lessons were hands-on – from an outsider's viewpoint, these seemed like the ones where the students learned the most, too. I think part of that is because they're seeing it work rather than memorizing how it's supposed to work.

In the fourth grade, for example, we watched this documentary on the Titanic that had these scientists going through the wreckage and deciding whether to put it in a museum or to leave it on the ocean floor. Then we had a class discussion about the ethical issues of that. The kids had all different opinions. It wasn't about who was right and who was wrong; it was just about whether you could support your opinion with evidence. We had a really thoughtful discussion.

Having gone through school twice, I think middle school is the hardest. I mean, you're changing physically, so things are awkward. And socially, it's all about not being "uncool." If I could give middle schoolers a piece of advice, it would be this: Whether you know it or not, everyone has a hard time in middle school and life really does get so much better.

"This, too, shall pass." That's something my Mom would always say to me. I think they are the four wisest words in the English language – whether you're on top of the world or down in the dumps. Everything is always changing, so there's really no point hanging onto things because life is going to change anyway.

What's next for me? Well, I'm going to keep on learning and trying to find my balance. I'm not 100% there yet, but I'm a hell of a lot closer than I was last year at this time.

When I started the project, I planned it in two parts. The fall portion was all about going back in time and making peace with my past. The spring has been about moving forward and figuring out what I want my future to look like and what kind of lifestyle I want to lead.

I figured it out to some extent. I've incorporated some music and yoga and cooking and laughter into my daily life. I want to become more financially stable. I want to write. Writing has been a passion since I was young, but I have a big ten-year gap where I didn't write much of anything except college papers and grant applications.

After doing all this, I think the one piece of advice I'd like to give everyone might sound cliché, but it's true: Be present for the opportunity and possibility in your life.