



# **Student Handbook**

Updated August 2021



Dear Students & Families,

Congratulations on your acceptance and welcome to The Island School! Challenge, adventure, self-knowledge and community connections await you on Eleuthera. You are about to embark on an expedition to a new and amazing world that will challenge you intellectually, emotionally, and physically. The rigorous academic program is designed to develop you into a more active participant in the discovery process. For example, you will be involved in authentic scientific research that will teach you how to investigate and effect solutions to real-world problems. Consequently, your work at The Island School moves far beyond the quest for a final grade. As a member of this small community, you will have an opportunity to lead others and to contribute to the ongoing development of our great school. At all times, you will be immersed in the environment—paddling your sea kayak into the wilderness, looking through the lens of your mask at the magical world beneath the sea, or gaining an understanding of the development of Eleuthera and The Bahamas through connecting with local people and communities.

The Island School experience has proven to be a catalyst for tremendous personal growth. You will come to learn as much about yourself as the world around you. There is much to be excited about, and we are very eager to meet you and learn alongside you. Please take the time to read through this handbook carefully. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions. Once you arrive here, we will discuss the material presented in this handbook. Again, congratulations and thank you for accepting the challenge.

Onward Together,

Sam Kosoff  
Semester Director



## **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook is designed to outline the rules and policies of The Island School and to introduce students and parents to life at our school. The Island School community depends on the pillars of respect, responsibility, integrity, and trust. Students are trained to act responsibly in a wilderness environment and to care for each other as a community. Safety is the top priority for everyone at the School. **\*Please note that items with an asterisk are under review given evolving COVID-19 protocols.**

## **WHAT IS THE ISLAND SCHOOL?**

The Island School Semester is a 14-week academic program for high school sophomores and juniors on the island of Eleuthera in The Bahamas. The semester program consists of the following central components: academic classes; outdoor and physical education programs; cultural programs; and self-awareness and leadership development. The academic program includes coursework in Human Ecology, Literature and Writing, Mathematics, Environmental Art, Histories, Applied Scientific Research, and Marine Ecology. The coursework is augmented by outdoor and physical education programming, including SCUBA diving and sea kayak expeditions, and cultural programming like Community Outreach, and Down Island Trips. Time is also allotted for leadership training. Students live on campus in open-bay dormitory buildings. They learn to negotiate close community living and are responsible for clean-up and campus duties. Life at The Island School is fast paced and rigorous. Through academic, social and physical challenges, students discover much about themselves, each other, and this remote, beautiful place where they are living.

## **ACADEMICS**

The educational philosophy of The Island School is based on students asking and often answering their own questions. Such a style allows for growth and maturation, presses students to apply specific skills they are learning in the classroom to solve problems, and helps develop a tolerance for uncertainty.

Credit offered—The Island School offers high school credit in each Research (science), Literature and Writing (English), Mathematics (math), Histories (history), Marine Ecology (science/physical education), Land and Environmental Art (studio art), and Morning exercise (physical education). Sending schools typically preview The Island School curriculum to help students plan their overall course of study to meet their own graduation requirements and review work completed at The Island School when students return from their semester away. The portfolio of work that students compose during the semester is a key resource for this process. Responsibility lies with the student to follow through with coursework they may miss while attending The Island School.



**Academic Honesty**—Individual integrity is essential to a successful community. Academic honesty is particularly important in a school community. Cheating and plagiarism represent two forms of academic dishonesty that will not be tolerated at The Island School and can result in dismissal of a student. We often do group work on projects and research in which students collaborate and share results. In these cases it is expected that all members of the group will cooperate and take an equal role in the completion of assignments.

**Advising and Student Support**—Each student is assigned a faculty advisor. The advisor serves as a point person for the students, and monitors overall student progress at school. The student's advisor is their go-to faculty member, and that faculty will work with them on personal growth throughout the semester. If an issue arises, the advisor works in collaboration with an administrator, the student, and the student's parents to bring about positive change. All advisors have 4-5 advisees. In our community, we have many resources to support students. Time is allotted in the weekly schedule for meetings with the faculty advisor. This faculty advisor is also responsible for providing a written report on the student's progress at midterm and semester's end.

**Assessment**—The Island School uses a skill-based assessment system focused on students acquiring fundamental tools that can be applied to all subjects and disciplines. The cross-disciplinary skills assessed throughout the term are Comprehension, Reasoning, and Communication. A standard A, B, C, D, F grading system with pluses and minuses is used. Our use of this skill-based system of assessment and evaluation allows us to give more detailed and focused feedback than traditional systems.

Final reports are thorough, including overall grades broken down into the skill areas and narrative feedback. Final grades, which are sent to parents and sending schools, arrive approximately two weeks after the completion of the semester or after all financial obligations have been met. These serve as the official grades of record for the Semester.

**\*Schedule**—The daily schedule at The Island School changes often. Given a greatly similar over-arching experience of the semester, the schedule that governs our day to day activities looks slightly different for each of our family groups. We start our days at 6:30 AM with a medical screening, as per our COVID-19 protocols. We then gather as a community - students and teachers - at morning circle to share announcements and the plan for the day. Following the singing of The Bahamas National Anthem, we transition to AMX- our morning exercise routine. We find that this activity helps jump-start the day, waking our minds as well as our bodies, and allows more time later for work, play and reflection. Exercises vary daily, building endurance, strength, and confidence in a variety of activities. Students come back from AMX to clean/organize their personal space and get ready for breakfast at 8:30 AM. Students rotate dish crew and general cleanup after meals.



Classes are held throughout the morning and afternoon with lunch happening every day at noon. Students have “exploration time” once per week from the end of classes until dinner, usually 4:30 - 5:45 PM and once every weekend, either in the morning or the afternoon. At 5:55 PM the entire community gathers for a dinner circle at which time we share announcements, reflect on the day. After dinner, this time is mostly dedicated to study, down time, dorm meetings, and occasional night classes. Teachers are often available during this time to assist students with homework. On duty faculty are present to assist with issues as they arise and to help facilitate weekly “phone time.” Students are expected to be in their dorms everyday at 9:30 PM. As our days are long and start early, lights-out is at 10:00 PM.

**Study Hours**—Study hours are typically from 8:00 - 9:30 PM Sunday through Friday. It is expected that the atmosphere throughout campus during study hours remains conducive to productive study. There are designated work spaces for quiet, individual study and group work. The dining hall is open for study breaks and snacks during these hours. Students, with the guidance of their advisor, are expected to take responsibility for managing their time.

**Standardized Testing**—We do not offer standardized testing during your time on Eleuthera.

### **\*COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

We typically facilitate more than 30 hours of community outreach in the surrounding communities of South Eleuthera. Because of the pandemic, we are unable to safely administer our typical programming. Our community outreach will be more focused on our immediate community through performing the necessary tasks and chores that make the campus operate efficiently.

### **OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

The outdoor leadership and physical components of The Island School are designed to challenge students to push themselves through difficulty and gain new found confidence. Students learn to persevere and move outside of their comfort zones, support one another when the going gets tough, and celebrate accomplishments as individuals and as a community.

### **EXPEDITIONS**

Sea kayaking expeditions are a key facet of our place-based education model, during which students interact with the coastal environment of South Eleuthera. Expeditions provide students the platform to learn essential hard skills involved in sea kayaking and leave no trace camping while building the soft skills associated with leadership. Students take turns leading their pod through the day’s route, selecting and setting up a campsite, cooking meals collaboratively, and learning about themselves and each other through various activities.



## **SOLO EXPERIENCE**

Students participate in a 48-hour solo experience. Our solo experiences are not designed to be survival tests, they are, however, a time for students to engage in reflection and spend time alone with their thoughts. The ability to reflect on our thoughts and critically analyze our actions and decisions are fundamental aspects of experiential education. While each student will have a unique solo experience, all students undergo this journey, ultimately strengthening community bonds.

## **MORNING EXERCISE**

The morning exercise program is a rigorous physical education experience. The entire community—students and faculty alike—spends at least one hour participating in a variety of workouts five days of the week. Most exercises include a combination of swimming, running, and calisthenics; other offerings center on team sports such as water polo, volleyball, or ultimate Frisbee, while yoga and snorkeling opportunities develop mental fortitude and wellness. In addition, our regular morning exercise takes place across Cape Eleuthera where we live, and serves as an added way to connect with and explore our environment.

## **SCUBA DIVING**

The SCUBA program is instrumental to the Island School journey because it provides students with an opportunity to explore the beautiful underwater environment that surrounds Eleuthera. Treated as a typical class, students must complete book work and demonstrate proficiency in a number of underwater skills. The SCUBA program supports our marine ecology curriculum, where students use SCUBA as a tool to access and better understand our marine environment. By the end of the semester, most students acquire PADI's Open Water Diver certification and log upward of five dives, including a night dive.

## **\*HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Island School program is focused on healthy living. Five days a week begin with exercise. Our goal is for students to return from The Island School program strong in body, mind, and spirit. In the event of illness, we have medically trained staff on our campus to handle day to day medical issues that arise. In addition there is an experienced and competent doctor, along with nurse practitioners, on call 24 hours a day at the Rock Sound Clinic located twenty miles from campus. More serious illness or injury that requires evacuation off the island is coordinated through The Island School staff. Teachers and staff members are trained in advanced wilderness first aid and there is always a staff member with a wilderness first responder (WFR) certification on call at the campus and on all wilderness expeditions. Strong reliance on the buddy system ensures that students take responsibility for themselves and their classmates. The Island School must have complete and up-to-date health information for each student. During orientation, the medical staff conducts personal interviews with each student. It is critical that every student has a medical form and a liability agreement signed by a parent



and a physician. Additionally, The Island School medical liability agreement must be completed and signed authorizing Island School staff to act and serve in loco parentis.

**We are requiring all Island School students to have a COVID-19 vaccine for the 2021-2022 school year.** All necessary forms are mailed to you well in advance of the start of your semester. All students are required to purchase Diver Alert Network (DAN) Preferred level insurance for emergency evacuations. The DAN phone number is (800) 446-2671 and the web site address is [www.diversalertnetwork.org](http://www.diversalertnetwork.org).

For legal reasons, students cannot access a first aid kit without faculty supervision. All student prescriptions and over-the-counter medications are checked by the medical staff upon arrival at the School and must be kept in the medical office and dispensed by the medical team. If a student feels ill, they should notify a faculty member who will make a judgment as to their care. By placing great emphasis and importance on training, health, and safety, we hope to prevent the occurrence of illness and accidents.

#### **KITCHEN AND DINING**

Students are expected to attend all meals. Due to the level of activity at The Island School, snacks are also available at 4:30 PM and 9:00 PM.

#### **SCHOOL STORE / STUDENT ACCOUNTS**

The School Store operates at designated times throughout the day. Students can purchase books, journals, school supplies, stamps, envelopes, dive tables and log books, Island School clothing and other items. All students will have an account to which they can charge school store items. Students may also draw cash from their accounts for trips to town or other incidentals. Parents will be billed monthly and or at the end of the semester after the students return home. Typical charges to the store account are about \$500-\$800 for the semester. If you would like a specific limit set on the student store account, please notify us.

#### **LAUNDRY**

Laundry is sent out and picked up once a week. It is usually returned the following day. Laundry costs are included in tuition. Students should bring 2 sets of standard twin sheets.

#### **\*FAMILY WEEKEND**

Parents/guardians and immediate family are invited to The Island School for a long weekend during the semester. Exact dates and details for the fall and spring Family Weekends will be communicated in a later mailing.

#### **COMMUNITY LIFE**

As stated at the beginning of this handbook, The Island School community depends on the



pillars of respect, responsibility, integrity, and trust. These same concepts, along with our overriding concern for the physical and emotional safety of our community members guide our rule structure. All school rules apply to all students at all times during their enrollment at The Island School, whether on or off campus. Enrollment at The Island School constitutes acceptance of all school rules and the consequences of their violation.

## **STUDENT RULES & EXPECTATIONS**

### **Community Life**

The Island School community depends on the pillars of respect, responsibility, integrity, and trust. These same concepts, along with our overriding concern for the physical and emotional safety of our community members guide our rule structure. All school rules apply to all students at all times during their enrollment at The Island School, whether on or off campus. Enrollment at The Island School constitutes acceptance of all school rules and the consequences of their violation. Our community expectations are considered central to our safety and success as a community. There are two community expectations, and following that, general rules and expectations of the school. Infractions fall under minor and major breachings, and “non-negotiable” dismissable violations detailed below.

### **Community Expectations**

1) You must not put yourself or anyone else in any kind of danger. This includes, and is not limited to: disobeying any safety rules or directions from faculty, disrespecting the emotional rights of others (bullying, hazing, etc.), or any other behaviors that jeopardize the physical or emotional health of a community member. You must not use, misuse, or be in possession of any illicit substances. Illicit substances include, and are not limited to alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarettes, marijuana, and the misuse of prescription medications. You must not engage in sexual activities.

2) You must be honest and trustworthy at all times. This includes, and is not limited to: lying, cheating, stealing, plagiarism, straying beyond established boundaries, sneaking out of the dormitories, etc.

### **General Rules**

The following general rules are designed to maximize learning and safety in our program:

*Academic Expectations*— It is expected that students will attend all classes and complete all assignments on time and to the best of their ability.

*Exclusive Relationships*— Much of what transpires during the 100-day semester at The Island School focuses on building a community. We encourage students to develop close and lasting friendships. Exclusive relationships, however, have the potential to harm the community by





creating boundaries between people. For this reason, exclusive relationships, whatever their nature, are discouraged as they disrupt the cohesiveness of a positive and productive community. Intimate contact and sexual relationships are prohibited for the reasons stated above as well as for health considerations.

*Transportation*— Students may travel in Island School motor vehicles driven by Island School staff members only, unless specific permission has been granted.

*Cell Phones*— Students are not permitted to have cell phones at The Island School. All phones are collected and safely and securely stored for the duration of the semester.

*Signing Out*— Students must sign out to leave campus for any reason other than sanctioned Island School activities. Students may not be off campus unaccompanied after dark under any circumstance. When signing out for school activities, students are agreeing to follow all the rules outlined

*Dormitory Rules and Expectations*— Students may not enter a dormitory that is not their own at any time. Check-in is at 9:30 PM every night. Lights are turned off in the dormitory at 10:00 PM every night. After this time (“lights out”), students may not leave their dorm. The dormitory space is the responsibility of all occupants. The dormitory must remain clean and clear of food. Food should never be consumed or stored in dorm space. All dormitory rules and expectations are strictly enforced.

*Dress Code and School Uniform*— Our Dress Code reflects the productive, professional and academic setting we are in. Please abide by these guidelines and show respect for our community.

**Uniform:** Following the lead of our host country, The Island School has a **school uniform**. Island School shirt or polo (excluding IS athletic shirts) and solid khaki, navy, or black shorts (conservative length, 5” inseam or longer) or pants (no jean shorts, rips, or tears). For colder weather, jeans or pants free of rips or tears are acceptable.

**Athletic/Swim Uniform:** Athletic shorts, or bathing suit (one piece or two piece) for swimming or athletic compression shorts / spandex, full coverage bottoms and supportive athletic tops required.

**Dress Code:**

- When not in school uniform, casual attire is permitted as are most clothes. *We provide reasonable rules and procedures for daily dress outside of the academic school day/week as follows:*



- *No torn or ripped clothing.*
- *No clothing with inappropriate language or symbols (including vulgar, bigoted, belittling, or exclusionary language or imagery, or the promotion of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs).*
- *Clothing must not expose midriffs, underwear/ undergarments or buttocks, have open sides or be transparent/shear.*
- *Shirts must be worn except at the beach, in the water or when exercising.*
- *Footwear must be worn at all times (except on the beach, in the dormitories, on boats, or in the water).*
- Students should plan on bringing casual but respectful clothing.

## **Clarifications**

**Meals:** uniform (Mon-Sat) dress code (Sun)

**Class Time:** uniform

**Research or Fieldwork:** long sleeve, hat, sunglasses, and appropriate footwear. Your research advisor will inform you of the appropriate clothing for your specific research class once you are here.

**Athletics/Swim Uniform:** Morning Exercise, Expeditions

**\*\* SCUBA diving:** All students are to wear a full coverage long sleeve, full coverage, appropriate bathing suit, including spandex or shorts when diving.

**Dorms:** dress code

**Study Hours:** dress code

**Community Outreach or special events:** uniform, specifically an Island School polo shirt, and longer conservative skirts, shorts, or pants.

**Downtime/Exploration time:** dress code. Whenever students are outside of the dorm, they must always be wearing shorts/pants, and shirts unless swimming or participating in AMX.

*\*Note: Dress codes vary by program and division. The dress code outlined above pertains to Semester & Summer Term students.*

## **Risk Management**

We are located in a remote location on the island of Eleuthera, this means we are 4-6 hours from definitive care. The Cape Eleuthera Island School has a comprehensive Risk Management Manual and students are expected to take risk management seriously.

Due to our location and the nature of our Semester, general risk management rules for our students include but are not limited to:

- You must wear shoes at all times with the exception of indoors, decks, and beaches
- No climbing trees above students own height
- No inversions (flipping)



- No head-first diving into water
- You must wear a helmet while riding a bike

### **Harassment Policy**

The Island School is a community in which every individual should be treated with respect and sensitivity. These are vital elements to the success of our community. Tolerance and patience should always be practiced and individuality should be encouraged. Harassment of any kind (ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, or sexual orientation) has no place in The Island School community. Harassment includes both overt acts of physical assault and less obvious forms of unnecessary touching, suggestive remarks, verbal abuse, graffiti, epithets or “humor.” Particularly egregious violations will be considered a violation of the first major school rule. A member of the community who believes that they have experienced any form of harassment should bring it to the attention of a faculty member immediately. All members of the community are obligated to take these complaints seriously, and immediate action will be taken against the individual or group that harasses others.

### **Infractions**

Violation of our community expectations falls into two categories

- 1. Dismissable Infraction**
- 2. Violations**

#### **Dismissable Infraction**

If you violate a dismissable infraction, you can expect to be sent home from The Island School. Things that fall under this category include but are not limited to -

- You must not use, misuse, or be in possession of any illicit substances. Illicit substances include, and are not limited to alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarettes, marijuana, and the misuse of prescription medications.
- You must not engage in sexual activities - sexual activities are considered anything below the waist

Your time here on Eleuthera is to be spent with the community, exploring yourself and your role in the world. As a school, we’ve drawn the line at the above items as hindrance to our ability to maintain a safe community environment. We ask that you understand this expectation and refrain from engaging in the above activities, if not, you may be sent home from the program.

#### **Violations**

Violations are split into two categories, minor and major infractions of our community expectations and general rules and expectations.

**Minor Infraction** includes but is not limited to -

- Disregarding safety expectations, unexcused absence from expected duties (dish crew,



chores, class, etc.), tardiness to designated check-in times, uniform transgressions, unsanctioned internet usage, engaging in exclusive relationships

**Major Infraction** includes but is not limited to -

- Lying, cheating, stealing, plagiarism, leaving established boundaries, disrespecting Island School, or community members property, \*intentionally not wearing your COVID mask, inverting (diving, flipping) into water

We understand that we are all human and make mistakes; we aim to hold space for processing mistakes and ultimately understanding our role in this community on a deeper level. You can expect to meet with your advisor, administrators, and the Semester or Summer Term Director following repeated violations. If understanding is not met, you can expect to be sent home from The Island School following repeated violations to our minor and major school rules.



## Student Rules & Expectations Contract

Student Name.....

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### Community Expectations

- 1) **You must not put yourself or anyone else in any kind of danger.** This includes, and is not limited to: disobeying any safety rules or directions from faculty, disrespecting the emotional rights of others (bullying, hazing, etc.), or any other behaviors that jeopardize the physical or emotional health of a community member. You must not use, misuse, or be in possession of any illicit substances. Illicit substances include, and are not limited to alcohol, tobacco, electronic cigarettes, marijuana, and the misuse of prescription medications. You must not engage in sexual activities.
- 2) **You must be honest and trustworthy at all times.** The following behaviors are not permitted: lying, cheating, stealing, plagiarism, travel beyond established boundaries/dormitories.

### Harassment Policy

The Island School is a community in which every individual should be treated with respect and sensitivity. These are vital elements to the success of our community. Tolerance and patience should always be practiced and individuality should be encouraged. Harassment of any kind (ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, or sexual orientation) has no place in The Island School community. Harassment includes both overt acts of physical assault and less obvious forms of unnecessary touching, suggestive remarks, verbal abuse, graffiti, epithets or “humor.” Particularly egregious violations will be considered a violation of the first major school rule. A member of the community who believes that they have experienced any form of harassment should bring it to the attention of a faculty member immediately. All members of the community are obligated to take these complaints seriously, and immediate action will be taken against the individual or group that harasses others.

I, the student, hereby agree to follow the above campus and program behavioral expectations and all rules and regulations of the program. I understand that a violation of any major school rule or campus policy may lead to immediate dismissal, as may other conduct, as determined by the School. I understand that we have no tolerance for bullying, engagement in sexual activities; possession, use, or misuse of illicit substances; and being outside of established boundaries.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_