



The Island School

# **SUMMER TERM CURRICULUM GUIDE**





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# The Island School Summer Term

The Island School Summer Term is an independent academic program in The Bahamas for high school sophomores and juniors, modeled after our widely recognized Semester. In many ways, the Summer Term is a condensed, Island School Semester experience. The month-long summer course of study includes investigations in Marine Ecology and Human Ecology.

Echoing the core tenants of our Island School Semester, the entire Summer Term is place-based and experiential, intentionally immersing the students in both the natural and cultural landscape of South Eleuthera. Consequently, summer courses have a strong field component to them in addition to nightly coursework and class discussions. Students' academic experience is bolstered by their earning PADI's Open Water Diver certification in addition to the physical education program where students spend five mornings each week exercising as a community.

Ultimately, the rigorous schedule and programs create a transformative experience for our students, who gain deep understandings of leadership, sustainability, community, and sense of place. Our admissions process is competitive; selected students demonstrate solid academic performance, leadership potential, and a high degree of self-motivation. Please contact us for more information.

We look forward to sharing our school with you.



# Vision & Mission

The Island School's vision is a mantra, not a statement; it is a powerful goal that resonates in the minds of every community member. Guiding both the vision and the mission is one central question.

## Central Question

*How do we live well in a place?*

## Mission

*Leadership effecting change.*

## Vision

The Island School serves as a catalyst in the global transition to a more livable future through:

*Developing an intimate sense of place in students through immersion experiences in the natural and cultural environment;*

*Modeling sustainability of individual lifestyles, larger communities, and the systems that support them;*

*Creating an intentional community whose members are cognizant of their abilities, limitations, and effect on others.*

# Teaching Philosophy

Teaching students about their environment, in their environment, is what The Island School is all about. Students are forced to think for themselves, provide answers for their own questions, and practice the skills of primary research. They practice these skills in all disciplines, whether in history using ethnographic interviews, in science with ecological field studies, or in English through expository writing employing critical perspectives.

## **Our teaching and learning is guided by the following principles:**

Less is more. We emphasize understanding and applying ideas and skills rather than covering content. By narrowing the focus we can go deeper.

Students are active participants in the learning process. The classroom is a true seminar where everyone shares information. The teacher is a facilitator and guide.

The learning process is accelerated when students are pushed outside of their comfort zones. Challenge begets positive growth.

All disciplines emphasize connection to place. Students must be immersed in the environment and challenged to articulate what they sense.

Academic work has real world application. There is a real job to complete that raises the bar beyond the quest for a final grade.

Assessment is an ongoing process, allowing time for revision and a clear explanation of expectations. The assessment process transcends disciplines and fosters a more in-depth, interdisciplinary learning journey.

There must be time for digestion and reflection.

The teacher is prepared to participate in assignments and provide models and rubrics.

The classroom is an open arena where students feel safe challenging ideas, where there is consistent faculty peer review. The classroom door is always open.

# Summer Term Curriculum

The Island School's Summer Term program and Human Ecology curriculum is rooted in pushing students to consider our guiding question: What does it mean to live well in a place? While the avenues through which this question are explored may shift from summer to summer, students will always explore significant topics that are grounded in The Island School campus and the island of Eleuthera, while simultaneously understanding the broader implications of these issues. Much of the learning during the summer takes place through field experiences outside of a traditional classroom and is complemented by nightly coursework and assessments. Students' coursework is split between 3 broad themes: Ecology, Food, and Tourism and Development. Ensuring a deeper understanding of each theme and its connection to 'living well in a place', students spend an entire week immersed in the complex nuances associated with each theme.

We believe living well requires a sense of place; as such, you will develop an awareness of, and appreciation for, the place in which you are spending your summer, particularly through the adjacent underwater world. You will explore tropical marine ecosystems through the use of SCUBA, snorkeling and free-diving. Species identification is just the first step to in-depth investigations as to how these species function as an ecosystem so that students will come to see the reefs they are exploring as complex systems that deserve our attention. Students will learn about fisheries management issues and have the opportunity to read, hear, and synthesize different viewpoints on human's role in caring for these ecosystems. Assessments will push students to demonstrate their knowledge of the ecological communities here, hone their observation skills, and grapple with different perspectives associated with managing marine resources.

From hearing first-hand a farmer's view on the importance of reigniting agriculture in Eleuthera, to critically analyzing and contributing to the creation of meals on campus, to looking at food systems on local and global scales, students will come to terms with the role of food in living well. The Island School provides a wonderful case study in how a community can struggle through obstacles to supporting itself with local agriculture. Our aquaponics systems and small orchard allow for initial investigations into small scale food systems, while visits to nearby small farms help students understand the story of agriculture on Eleuthera. Assignments and assessments will challenge students to consider some of the scientific, industrial, and cultural sides of food systems both on this island and at home.

Lastly, you will travel "down-island," or north on Eleuthera, in order to consider how tourism and development has reshaped Bahamian culture within the context of global flows of people and resources. Eleuthera itself has a fascinating recent history – one that is evident in development efforts as close as a mile from school – that students will try to understand through various written perspectives, conversations with local Bahamians, and media representations of The Bahamas. Students will be asked to grapple with questions about their own identity, perspective, and role in visiting Eleuthera as they synthesize their experience into written and oral arguments.

As a complement to this experience, students will have the opportunity to explore how scientific



research being undertaken at The Cape Eleuthera Institute lends itself to supporting an analysis of these themes. For instance, CEI's Flats Ecology Program aligns directly with the theme of Tourism and Development, as the utilization of science toward the goal of sustaining an ecosystem ties closely in with the bonefishing industry that brings so many fisherman to The Bahamas. Please refer to the CEI website for more information on each of its ongoing research projects.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- *What does it mean to live well in a place?*
- *What encompasses tropical marine ecosystems and what is my responsibility toward them?*
- *How will I travel in the future and learn from a place and its people?*
- *What is the story of the food I am eating?*

## ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

- *Humans have opportunities to make impactful choices about their interaction with a place and the management of valuable resources.*
- *Marine and human ecosystems are interdependent and interconnected communities*
- *A balanced story of a place and its people must consider a wide range of perspectives and sources.*
- *Resources - such as food - upon which we rely for basic needs, involve complex systems.*



# Outdoor Expeditions & Physical 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.



## Morning Exercise

The morning exercise program is a rigorous physical education program. For instance, 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. Summer students work toward a culminating exercise that involves a roughly 10km course of running and swimming.

## Sea Kayaking

The Island School has a fleet of sea kayaks that summer students have the opportunity to use. Students can gain comfort on the water learning basic paddling and wet exits skills before exploring the surrounding coastline.

## SCUBA

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 the same as any class, students must complete book work and demonstrate proficiency in a number of underwater skills. Also, natural history lessons frequently accompany dives, requiring the students to identify the marine organisms they encounter or conduct fish surveys of the reefs. By the end of the summer, all students acquire PADI's Open Water Diver certification and log approximately several additional dives.





The Island School, Eleuthera, The Bahamas | [www.islandschool.org](http://www.islandschool.org) | [info@islandschool.org](mailto:info@islandschool.org)