

# POSITION STATEMENT

# THE ISLAND SCHOOL

CAPE ELEUTHERA, BAHAMAS



HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH  
START DATE: JULY 1, 2027



The Island School





## OVERVIEW

On the beautiful island of Eleuthera, surrounded by clear blue Bahamian waters, The Island School brings together students from pre-K through Ph.D., and world-renowned researchers, to create transformational learning experiences. By connecting primary research to education and outreach, The Island School creates unique opportunities for students and scientists to learn about native ecosystems and environmental sustainability through immersive, place-based experiences. With a beautiful campus and the surrounding ocean as a laboratory, students and scientists study, research, and live in an experiential learning community dedicated to a more environmentally responsible and sustainable future. Here, students, educators, and researchers work side by side, connecting with the environment and engaging in the process of inquiry to discover sustainable solutions to real-world problems.

The Island School has an extraordinary history and legacy and has had an incredible positive impact on generations of students over its 25-year history. Inspired over that epoch by the amazing energy and vision of Chris Maxey, The Island School is now poised to emerge from its founding and entrepreneurial phases to an exciting, bright, sustainable future.

While perhaps most broadly known as a singularly compelling and successful high school semester program, The Island School is actually a highly complex organization with five primary components. These are the High School Semester and Summer Term; the Cape Eleuthera Institute; Deep Creek Middle School; the Elementary Learning Center; and Visting Programs. More on these divisions below, but it is important for all interested in this unique leadership opportunity to grasp the full scope of responsibilities and possibilities that are essential and intricately interconnected elements of the overall organization. Moreover, due to both the historical evolution of The Island School and legal requirements in both the United States and The Bahamas, there are two governing boards, one for The Island School in-country and one for the Cape Eleuthera Foundation in the U.S., the primary financial, fundraising and recruitment vehicle for the organization. While these two boards collaborate closely and effectively, this does lend a degree of complexity to governance and administration not common in most U.S. schools.

The Island School is seeking its next Head of School to begin service in July of 2027. This is, without question, one of the most inspiring, unique and special education leadership opportunities available at this juncture.



## HISTORY

In 1996, the Island School's founder, Chris Maxey, received a fellowship from The Lawrenceville School where he was then a teacher, allowing him to work towards his master's degree at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science at the University of Miami. During this year-long sabbatical, Chris began his research in sustainable aquaculture. He formed the U.S. non-profit Cape Eleuthera Marine Conservation Project (now the Cape Eleuthera Foundation, Inc.) and began to set the framework to build a school and research station at Cape Eleuthera in The Bahamas, having visited the island many times in his youth.

Prior to the founding of The Island School, Chris hosted student groups on Eleuthera. Some were middle school students from New York, others were from Eleuthera, and some groups included both. Lawrenceville teachers gathered in July 1998 at Cape Eleuthera to design The Island School curriculum at the first "teacher conference" (now Educators Conference) — a tradition of experiential education technique practice and sharing that has continued each summer since.

On March 15, 1999, Chris and Pam Maxey welcomed 22 students and 6 faculty from Lawrenceville School to launch the first Island School Semester — an opportunity to share his research and engage high school students in a powerful, place-based educational experience. The organization grew rapidly in the following years, all the while staying true to the founding vision of education, research, and conservation. Today, The Island School welcomes over 500 students each year from ages 3 to Ph.D.



## EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

At The Island School, the unique island environment serves as a classroom and informs the educational model. The organization is an ecosystem of education-based programs operating at the forefront of educational reform and experiential learning, aligned around a common mission of "Leadership Effecting Change."

The Island School serves a diverse group of Bahamian and international students. Through holistic learning experiences designed to challenge students intellectually, emotionally and physically, the School develops leaders who inspire change locally and globally. Each student's learning journey is distinct, but all programs are enriched by projects and real work done collaboratively across the organization. The Island School programs are designed to connect students intimately with their environment through ongoing work in sustainable development and environmental stewardship in South Eleuthera.

The Island School aims to reimagine what education is for, and redesign how education can be delivered. The Island School educators, scientists, engineers, staff and students work and learn shoulder-to-shoulder on a campus powered by renewable energy and innovative practices on how to live well in a place, and all share the belief that students should be generators of knowledge, not just consumers of it. There is no such thing as an academic exercise, as the work has real-world value beyond the educational experience. The Island School curricula are designed to foster critical thinking, curiosity, and communication, and students are actively engaged in the development and assessment of their learning.

## SEMESTER AND SUMMER SCHOOL

**The Island School Semester** is a single-semester 100-day fall or spring program designed for high school sophomores and juniors. Students from around the world join The Island School community to learn in the beautiful natural environment of South Eleuthera, acquiring profound understandings of ecology, history, and culture through direct experience in the ecosystems and surrounding communities. A major objective of the Semester School is to create and sustain an “intentional community,” where all members contribute of their time, energy and care willingly, and equity is a priority.

While learning and researching outdoors, students study one topic through the lens of another. The curriculum is interdisciplinary, meaning that there are no clear lines that divide or separate classes from one another. This cross-curricular model challenges students to think outside the box and practice using their newly obtained skill sets in real-life situations.

**Semester students complete a course of study** in seven classes, including Applied Mathematics, Applied Scientific Research, Histories of the Bahamas, Island School Seminar, Land and Environmental Art, Literature and Writing, and Marine Ecology. Students also participate in regular community engagement with other programs in The Island School and neighboring community members.

To learn more about The Island School semester program and curricula, please [click here](#).

**The Island School Summer Term** is a condensed, six-week intensive program modeling many principles of the Semester School. Designed for rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors, the Summer Term is place-based and experiential, connecting students to the natural and cultural landscape of South Eleuthera.

The Summer Term program of active study includes investigations in Marine Ecology and Human Ecology, courses that will introduce students to marine research and environmental management practices. Like the Semester, summer courses have a strong field component to them; students explore local ecosystems alongside scientists at Cape Eleuthera Institute, and focus studies on ecology, research, and sustainable development.





## CAPE ELEUTHERA INSTITUTE

The **Cape Eleuthera Institute** (CEI) is a dedicated center for research and innovation. Devoted to research, education, and conservation, CEI seeks to create a connection between people and the environment as a path toward a more sustainable future. CEI promotes the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems by facilitating the research of resident and visiting scientists, supporting the education of students at all levels, and spurring outreach efforts to enhance the environmental awareness of local and global communities.

From conducting research, to developing innovative systems on the island campus that model sustainability, to collaborating with university scientists and conservation organizations, CEI researchers are eager to share their work, knowledge, and resources to help drive positive change for The Bahamas and the planet.

Education is a core component of CEI's work. At CEI, students engage with scientists on research projects, helping to examine the different ecosystems of Eleuthera and learning about the natural world through their own experiences. This may be Semester students investigating marine ecosystems; Deep Creek Middle School students exploring coral reefs; elementary students assisting in sea turtle research; or undergraduates helping scientists tag nurse sharks. CEI provides students of all ages with the opportunity to do work in conservation, sustainability, and local ecosystems. Students can collaborate with world-class scientists, doing substantive research that truly makes a difference in the world.

To learn more about CEI, including current and past research projects and the available facilities, please explore the Island School website [here](#).







## DEEP CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Deep Creek Middle School** (DCMS) at The Island School is an independent school for students in grades seven through nine located in South Eleuthera. Opened in 2001, DCMS provides an educational experience that is different from other schools on the island, bringing an alternative, experiential approach to the Bahamian curriculum. DCMS is fully endorsed and recognized by the Bahamian Ministry of Education.

In a nurturing educational environment, DCMS delivers a vibrant academic program in math, science, social studies, English, health, religious studies, and art, based on the Bahamian National Curriculum. However, the Island School's hands-on, place-based approach to learning allows DCMS to reach beyond the traditional classroom into the outdoor classroom of South Eleuthera. Working closely within The Island School community including researchers from the Cape Eleuthera Institute, students study the environment by being in the outdoors — such as exploring mangrove creeks, tracking sea turtles, collecting data on crab habitats, scuba diving among coral reefs, and more.

## THE ELEMENTARY LEARNING CENTER

**The Elementary Learning Center** (ELC) is a unique school for children aged 3 to 10. Founded by The Island School in 2013, the ELC provides a stimulating, hands-on learning environment that encourages children to use their creativity, curiosity, and intellect to explore and think critically about the world around them. The ELC serves The Island School's youngest learners in a multi-age classroom. The ELC uses a blend of the best evidence-based practices in early childhood education, while following the same educational principles as the overall organization — learning and growing in an environment that values hands-on, place-based education.

## VISITING PROGRAMS

The Island School is committed to providing a progressive and dynamic environment for visiting groups and students of all ages to engage in experiential learning. Through the **Visiting Programs**, or short courses, The Island School instills within group members a sense of place and leadership that enables them to make meaningful changes in their own communities. Implementing

primary research, working with sustainable systems, learning about the island habitat, and incorporating outreach with the local community makes the Visiting Programs a transformative experience for all participants.

While here, student groups engage as intentional members of The Island School community. They are accommodated in the school's seaside dorm facilities. They participate in dish crew and daily chores, adopt sustainable-living practices, volunteer within the local community, and more. Visiting groups also have access to Island School programs focused on scuba diving (certified or uncertified), as well as camping and expeditions.

Visiting Programs include school groups in search of a unique educational experience, special interest groups wanting to visit Eleuthera for a short program or to conduct their own research, or local community groups with an idea for a program or workshop. The Island School works with groups to design and implement programs to meet their needs.

Every summer, through the weeklong **Educators Conference**, The Island School campus becomes a learning laboratory for educators and school administrators interested in probing best practices in experiential education. The Educators Conference provides a unique opportunity for educators to challenge themselves to become students engaged in sustainable community living and place-based learning. The conference is an opportunity for classroom teachers, administrators, counselors, program leaders, and others in the education field to learn about The Island School program and collaborate with other professionals. Participants come from The Island School sending schools, as well as other schools from all around the world.

The Island School also offers a variety of local programs designed to serve the communities of Eleuthera and The Bahamas. These include: the Apprenticeship Program; the Young Leadership



Program; The Lab School; Bahamas Environmental Stewardship Scholars; as well as an After School and a Local Scholars Program.

Please explore The Island School [website](#) to learn more about visiting and local programs, as well as the remarkable full breadth of people, thought, experiences, opportunities, and programming that are integral to this expansive institution.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

The “Our Blue Horizon” Strategic Plan, approved and initiated in 2022, provides the road map for the Island School as it enters the next phase in its history and evolution. Under the heading of “Offering Transformational Educational Opportunities,” the plan asserts that The Island School serves as a catalyst in the global transition to a more livable future through three institutional keystones:

- Develop a sense of place in students through immersion experiences in the natural and cultural environment.
- Model sustainability of individual lifestyles, larger communities, and the systems that support them.
- Create an intentional community in which members are cognizant of their abilities, limitations, and effect on others.



In an opening section of the Plan, under the heading “One Circle,” the Island School community establishes its purpose and vision for the future:

*At The Island School, we have always believed in modeling a shift toward a more livable future. Founded by Chris and Pam Maxey with a vision to transform education, for over twenty wonderful years our community has provided opportunities to discover that people can make a difference, turn the tide, and effect positive change in the way we live. As we look ahead, The Island School is poised for the next phase of the journey in which we dig deeply into our past, dream about the future, and emerge with clarity around our goals for the coming years.*

*In order to cultivate the next generation of leaders and equip them with the vision and tools to impact positive change in their communities, we must ensure that our model of education, recognized for its lasting, transformative impact, will be around for generations to come. Our conservation and sustainability research continues to inform important government decisions on a global scale, while also empowering young people to roll up their sleeves, do real work, use their voices and commit to being stewards of our planet. As we hone this model, we seek to further define our presence both internally and externally so that our mission and purpose are aligned and evident in everything we do. The priorities outlined in this plan will carry us beyond our next twenty years and sustain us into the future. Our central question is an essential one, and we're eager to work together and continue asking: how do we live well in a place?*

Please explore the specific elements of the Our Blue Horizon Strategic Plan [here](#).

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The next Head of School at The Island School should be prepared to collaborate effectively with dedicated Board members and a devoted school community to fulfill the school's mission and strategic plan and to lead the school wisely and confidently into the future by embracing current challenges and seizing new opportunities. These challenges and opportunities include but are not limited to the following:

Strive effectively to sustain the fundamental vision for The Island School articulated from the time of its founding and do so by upholding and fulfilling both the promise and specific components of the Our Blue Horizon Strategic Plan of 2022.

The Island School is in huge measure the product of the vision, energy, leadership, and efforts of its founder. Yet moving from the founder to a sustainable future that both respects the founder and charts a new course will require confident, perceptive, effective leadership from the new Head of School. The boards and administration of The Island School, as well as the founder, are committed to facilitating and supporting this essential transition.





As one administrator at The Island School wryly asserted, “There is no Starbucks in South Eleuthera.” This region is remote, services and goods are limited, and the rural environment itself presents challenges. The next Head of School must embrace and take joy from the people and place and accept that the challenges are central to the philosophy, purpose, and experience of The Island School.

Cultural competency is essential to living well and in harmony in South Eleuthera. The Bahamas, and especially the more remote locations in The Bahamas, have unique elements of culture, environment, government, education and outlook. Understanding this, respecting this, enjoying this, and working in close and humble harmony with it, are critical necessities to successful leadership in this place.

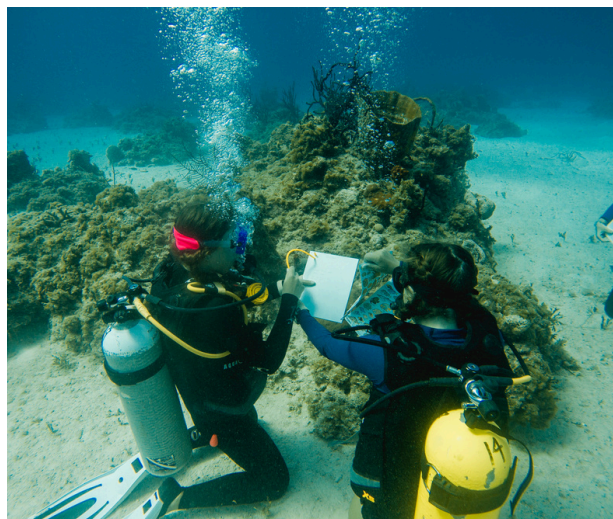
To establish a successful, sustainable future for The Island School, the many parts of the organization need to be conceived of and function effectively as a single entity. The process of building effective systems and more functional organizational structure now underway must be sustained and improved upon. Systems thinking needs to be better inculcated into the leadership culture in order to achieve the established goal of having “One Island School.”

Deep commitment to and understanding of both experiential, place-based education, as well as sustainability, are ongoing goals of the institution and fundamental to the philosophy and function of every division and program. While systems improvement is essential, so too is understanding of how to foster and implement change and innovation in the context of both sustainability and experiential education.

While all elements of The Island School are equally important, the financial reality is that the Semester School and its graduates, parents, past parents and many donors, are the financial cornerstone of the organization. Supporting and fully enrolling the Semester School, in a market environment where many semester schools are struggling, will remain a critical focus of the Head of School.

The next Head of School must continue to stimulate ongoing curricular and programmatic evolution, both to sustain support for and the relevance of The Island School, as well as to generate the dynamism of thought, commitment and energy that underpin the culture and experience of the organization.

As several key leaders at The Island School expressed, they would like to see The Island School recognized as the best employer in South Eleuthera.



## KEY QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The successful candidate to be Head of School at The Island School will be a mission and values-driven leader who will embody and demonstrate most, if not all, of the following skills, qualities, characteristics and experiences:

- Demonstrated success as an inspirational, caring, wise, and collaborative leader and educator.
- Ability to serve as a visible, energetic, and engaged presence in The Island School and South Eleuthera communities.
- Background in, experience with, and commitment to experiential and place-based education.
- Breadth of experience and perspective relevant to school leadership and familiarity with culture, academics and programming in a highly complex school and organization.
- Personal integrity and high emotional intelligence, along with warmth, humility, flexibility, grace under pressure, steadiness, and a sense of humor.
- Understanding of the marketing of educational institutions and the ability to lead and collaborate effectively with recruiting and marketing professionals.
- Demonstrated experience as an ambitious and innovative strategic thinker and implementer of strategic vision.
- A systems thinker, skilled at addressing organizational tasks and challenges.
- Capacity to serve as an ethical, firm, decisive, and transparent role model, and capacity to call on others to be their best selves in a community.
- Financial acumen, fundraising experience, entrepreneurial ability, and a record of ambitious and data-driven change.



- Cultural competence and significant experience with building and supporting equitable, inclusive, and broadly diverse communities.
- Willingness to “chip in” and fully participate in the life and activities of the organization.
- Talent in identifying, selecting, retaining and inspiring outstanding teachers, staff, and administrators, as well as for supervising, motivating and developing them, and encouraging their professional growth.
- Skill and experience with management and in fostering interconnections across an institution, effectively delegating responsibility and establishing accountability, and breaking down silos and developing effective teams, especially among the senior leadership.
- Ability to forge authentic relationships with a wide range of people both within the constituencies of the school and externally, including students, board members, parents, former parents, alumni, and wider community members.
- Superb written, oral, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Willingness to lead in alignment with the founding principles, mission, values, and strategic vision for the future of the school.





## TO APPLY

The Island School has retained Resource Group 175 (RG175) to support its search for a new Head of School. If you wish to submit your application, you may do so here:

**<https://rg175.com/candidate/register>**

An application includes:

- Letter of interest (cover letter)
- Resume or CV
- An educational or leadership philosophy statement
- A writing sample of choice (optional, and submitted as part of a single PDF with the philosophy statement) and
- Names of five current references and contact information (the references will not be contacted until the finalist stage of the process.)

**THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATION MATERIALS IS FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2026.**

For any questions or further information about the position, please contact the consultants below, but only do so with an accompanying resume or CV:

Tony Featherston: **[tfeatherston@rg175.com](mailto:tfeatherston@rg175.com)**

Bob Henderson: **[rhenderson@rg175.com](mailto:rhenderson@rg175.com)**

Marcia Spiller: **[marcia.spiller@rg175.com](mailto:marcia.spiller@rg175.com)**