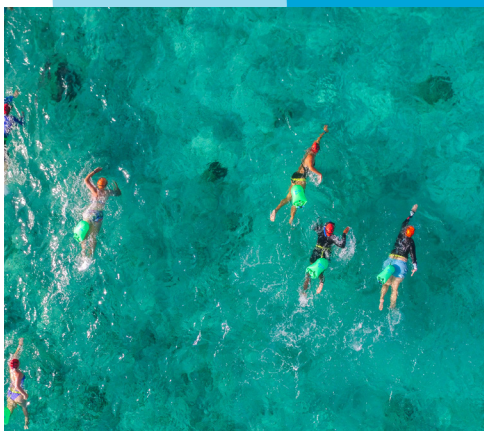




The Island School

CURRICULUM GUIDE

SUMMER 2026



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The Island School Summer Term

The Island School Summer Term is a six-week, independent, academic program in The Bahamas for rising high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Throughout the program, students engage in community building, personal growth, scientific research, physical and outdoor education, cultural and environmental immersion, and three core academic courses: Marine Ecology, Sustainable Systems, and Tourism and Development. Our entire program is place-based and experiential, intentionally immersing students in both the natural and cultural landscape of South Eleuthera as they explore our central question of “how do we live well in a place?” Through the combination of our rigorous schedule and programming, we challenge students to think critically and creatively to understand this question through the lenses of our three institutional keystones: Sustainability, Community, and Sense of Place. Our academic summer program creates a complex, thoughtful, and holistic experience for exceptional high school students.



Our Mission & Vision

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: *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 fundamental to the Island School experience. Students are asked to think for themselves, provide answers to their own questions, and practice primary research skills. They exercise these skills in all disciplines; whether through ethnographic interviews, ecological field studies, or expository writing employing critical perspectives. The following principles guide our teaching and learning:

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

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 their understanding.

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



Academic Courses

Throughout The Island School Summer Term academic courses, students explore relevant topics that are grounded in the Island School campus and the island of Eleuthera, while simultaneously understanding the broader implications of these issues globally. Throughout the term, students consider the following six essential questions:

- How does one develop a sense of place?
- What perspectives are necessary when developing a sense of place?
- How does an individual positively influence a community and place?
- What role do humans play in our planet, and what role does our planet play in our lives?
- What are the everyday choices that I make that potentially impact the resources and systems we need to survive?
- How does my identity affect my relationship with the world and others?

Through collaborative and independent learning spaces, students explore these topics and begin to transfer their new skills, knowledge, and experiences to their day-to-day lives. These academic courses are preparing students for their return home, where they have the opportunity to continue to be change-makers and leaders in their own communities and beyond.

The following five courses are reflected on student transcripts: Marine Ecology, Sustainable Systems, Tourism & Development, Capstone, and Physical Education. Students receive a detailed final report to include a pass/fail grade, teachers' comments, and an advisor letter. Students will also have opt-in opportunities to log up to 10 hours of community service, which is also included on their transcript.



Marine Ecology

Through exploration of the abundant marine resources surrounding the Island School campus, students develop an awareness of—and an appreciation for—tropical marine ecosystems. Using scuba diving and snorkeling as means to spark curiosity, students literally immerse themselves in the marine environment. Major themes discussed in this class include fish biodiversity in response to ecosystem pressures, the interconnectedness of marine species, and the unique roles that each marine ecosystem plays in the lives of animals and humans. Course activities may include fish and invertebrate identification, practicing field science through coral reef and mangrove ecosystem surveys, exploring the impacts of invasive species through lionfish dissection, and reading and understanding ecological perspectives through scientific literature. This course inspires students to take ownership of their role in this blue world and to consider their individual and global responsibility to conserve life in our oceans for future generations.



Sustainable Systems

The Sustainable Systems course introduces students to a framework for sustainability centered around three pillars: environment, society, and economy. Students are given the opportunity to assess the world around them and create meaningful change. Throughout the week, students study the systems of food and agriculture, fisheries and the marine environment; renewable energy, water usage, and waste management. Course activities may include a visit to a local permaculture farm, interviews with local fishermen, exploration of on-campus energy systems from an engineering perspective, and an introduction to large-scale recycling. Students investigate how these systems balance the three pillars of sustainability and, through the lens of environmental justice, are encouraged to draw from personal experiences to consider the role these systems play in their own communities. In the process, students realize the complexities of some of our most important sustainable systems.



Tourism & Development

The Tourism and Development course takes place over six days of road-tripping and camping throughout the island of Eleuthera— known colloquially as the Down Island Trip (DIT). While camping and traveling, students visit significant cultural and historical sites while also analyzing current and past uses of these spaces, and the impacts that the tourism industry has on each site. Over the course of the week, students examine the legacy of colonialism and foreign imposition throughout history on the island of Eleuthera, as well as The Bahamas and the wider Caribbean. Throughout this study, students aim to confront biases, gather multiple perspectives to each story, and challenge sources and popular stories throughout history. Students participate in a variety of activities, Harkness discussions, and written reflections throughout the course. The week culminates in a 40-hour reflective solo experience for each student where they are asked to look inward, taking time to meditate on their thoughts and experiences, and put into practice their new learned tools to engage in meaningful reflection time.



Capstone Project

The Summer Term Capstone Project serves as a culmination of each unique student's transformative journey at The Island School. Through this project, students engage in reflection on their personal growth and experiences, deepening their understanding of the school's mission and core values. Students explore how these values have shaped their perspectives and actions, preparing them to transfer their newfound knowledge and insights to their lives back home. This project encapsulates the core of the Island School experience, highlighting the integration of academic learning, personal development, and real-world application.

Capstone projects are a mixed-media collection unique to each student.



Outdoor Education

The outdoor leadership and physical components of The Island School are designed to support students as they push themselves through difficulty and, through these challenging milestones, gain new-found confidence. Students learn to persevere and move outside of their comfort zones, support one another, and celebrate accomplishments as individuals and as a community.

Physical Education

The morning exercise program (AMX) includes the entire community—students and faculty alike—spend at least one hour participating in a variety of workouts five days a 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. Summer students work toward a culminating endurance event that involves a roughly 10km course of combined running and swimming, commonly known as the Monster Run Swim.

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. Students must complete book work and demonstrate proficiency in a number of underwater skills before putting these new practices to use in the Marine Ecology class. By the end of the summer, most students acquire PADI's Open Water Diver certification and log up to three additional dives.



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