

Good Morning everyone, my name Ian Cook and for the past three months I went to The Island School in the Bahamas.

The Island School is a nonprofit organization that emphasizes community and sustainability. At The Island School sustainability tied into everything we did there and affected everything as little as flushing the toilets, taking a shower, and even turning on the lights.

All of these things tied in to the community aspect because we all used the same power and we all used the same water on campus. For example, we would have to take “military showers,” which were extremely short. All of our water came from the rain, and if we ran out of the water (thank God we didn’t), we would have to shower and do everything else in the ocean.

Now that you know this, some of you who know me well and are probably wondering “How did you get involved in this” and believe me, before I left for The Island School I asked my self the same thing.

I first heard of The Island School back in eighth grade, and I did a little research, and back then I had a lot of crazy ideas. I pushed this idea away because I thought to myself “it’s three years away; that's a long time from now.” But, it wasn’t until sophomore year when I went to Utah, and I met this kid who went there and he completely sold me on going.

As a result, I looked up the application, and the deadline was just three days away. In those three days, I ran around campus getting different signatures and recommendations from teachers around the School. At this point, I still wasn't sure, but then I thought to myself, "why not?"

A lot of people have been asking me "did you do school there" and "what did you even do there," so now I'm going to tell you what I did.

A lot of our classes revolved around the island of Eleuthera. For example, for English we analyzed Bahamian books and poems; for history class, we learned about the history of the island; In math class, we examined statistics such as our water and energy consumptions on campus; and for science, or what they call marine ecology, we scuba dove in the ocean and took notes analyzing coral reefs and fish.

In between these academic weeks, we had camping trips that lasted up to nine days. During one of the camping trips, each Island School student had to go on a "solo." A solo is when you're alone on a beach by yourself for 48 hours with a bag containing a bagel, a soggy piece of government cheese, a small handful of granola, a jug of water, and a tarp.

Next, at The Island School, everybody was required to partake in research groups throughout the semester. These can vary from going out into the ocean and researching turtles and sharks, or making use out of an invasive species on the Island. I was apart of the "energy team" which was a group of six, and we were a

part of developing a microgrid. A microgrid is a fully autonomous system that generates and stores its own power through the use of a grid. Since I am not at the Island School, I am not there to help build the system, but when it is fully implemented, The Island School will be the first school in North America to have this system. At the end of the semester, our research group had to essentially pitch our project in front of 2 to 3 hundred people to perhaps get funding.

So, here is an example of our schedule at the Island School. So almost every morning we would wake up at 6:15 and then go to circle, where we all would meet, essentially our version of a morning meeting. And then we would, depending what each student chose, either run or swim. I decided to run. So, at the end of the semester, each island school student either had to run a half marathon or, if you swam, you would have to swim 4 miles in the open ocean.

So here are a few pictures of my dorm and as you can tell its not your typical Four Seasons resort. So in our dorm we had two large rooms which fit 12 kids each, and then there was a sitting area in the middle. Also, we had no air conditioning and definitely no bug prevention in there as well.

So, I forgot to mention that I didn't have a phone or wifi for the entirety of my experience at The Island School. And every Sunday, once a week, I got to talk to my parents for 20 minutes.

I know a lot of you guys are thinking that you can't survive without a phone, but honestly its one my biggest takeaways that I had from The Island School. I was

living off the grid in every sense of the phrase. Without a phone, one eliminates all of the irrelevant distractions and the adverse effects that social media brings. Without a phone, I learned to appreciate my surroundings and think openly without anything interrupting my train of thought. Also, without technology, I learned to make the most out of what I had and the resources around me.

Another takeaway I had at The Island School was that I became more appreciative of the things I took for granted here at home such as ice, cold water, air conditioning, and of course Dunkin Donuts — I had none of those things.

So to end this I have question that one of my Island School teachers asked me: "If you had \$86,400 in you bank account and it was replenished every day to the same amount , would you spend it all or leave it?" Right, spend all of the money. There are 86,400 second in a day, so why not spend every second taking opportunities and living you best life.

Before I show you guys the video and answer some questions, I'd like to thank Mr. A, Mrs. Pepper, Seniors De la Torre, Mr. Burns, Mr. Caldwell, Ms. Romero and Mrs. Wooldredge for all the help. Thank you!