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EXCEPTIONAL MINDS

For Immediate Release

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The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Awards \$7,500 Grant to Exceptional Minds for Summer Workshops



Thanks in part to a grant by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Exceptional Minds summer workshops for youth with autism will once again feature animated shorts, video games, and visual effects.

Sherman Oaks, California – Exceptional Minds digital arts vocational school received a \$7,500 grant this week from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in support of its summer workshops for youth with autism.

Exceptional Minds, the first and only digital arts academy now preparing young adults with autism for careers in film post-production, visual effects and animation, was one of 32 selected out of 95 applicants to receive a 2014 educational grant from Hollywood's most prestigious organization.

“When it comes to support by the industry, this is like winning an Oscar for us. We are so honored to be chosen for this grant, which will pay for some of the expenses that come with a

program of this quality taught by industry pros,” said Yudi Bennett, the school’s director of operations who helped co-found the school in 2011 along with others from the movie industry as a way to bridge the gap between high school and the working world for young people with autism.

The grant will provide operational funding for the school’s summer workshops, which are held at the Exceptional Minds campus in Sherman Oaks June 16 through mid-August.

Exceptional Minds is attended during the school year by young adults in their early to mid-20s who are preparing for careers in the digital arts, but is open during the summer months to younger youth with autism who are interested in exploring the digital arts for fun or as a possible career path. The two-week summer workshops cover visual effects, Flash 2D gaming, cartoon animation, and after effects animation, and are offered to youth living with autism spectrum disorders 12 or older.



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Exceptional Minds is instructed and run by professionals who have worked in animation and post-production for big names such as Disney, Nickelodeon, ABC, Warner Bros., and Cartoon Network.

Since opening its doors, Exceptional Minds has received interest and support from all walks of Hollywood and related industries, including DreamWorks Animation, Newman's Own Foundation, Autodesk, Adobe Systems, Method Studios, and Stargate Studios. The school's close working relationship with Hollywood has also provided its students with industry experience – and, in many cases, movie credit. Exceptional Minds students have worked on several other high-profile projects, including post-production for Oscar-nominated movie *American Hustle* and the end-credit screen crawl for the 2012 motion picture *Lawless*.

The school, a 501C nonprofit, is unique in that it prepares students with autism for careers through professional accreditation and real work experience in the movie industry, including technical training for Adobe (ACA) certification, job readiness skills and a professional reel/portfolio that graduates can use to seek employment in the fields of animation, rotoscoping, and visual affects.

Exceptional Minds is currently [taking applications](#) for limited openings for its summer workshops, which are held at the school's new high-tech facility in Sherman Oaks, Calif., co-located with the Exceptional Minds Studio.

About Exceptional Minds (<http://www.exceptionalmindsstudio.org>):

Exceptional Minds is a non-profit vocational center and working production studio for young adults on the autism spectrum. It was chartered in 2011 to provide the training necessary for creatively gifted individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who may not otherwise be able to make the transition from high school to careers. Exceptional Minds offers technical proficiency and work readiness training that prepares students for careers in graphic arts, animation, web design, visual effects and rotoscoping. Located in Sherman Oaks, California, Exceptional Minds is both an instructional learning facility and a working studio with hands-on student involvement in production projects, many for the film industry.

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