



The California Academy of Sciences hosts first teen-focused “Science Game Jam” with help from local gaming pros

Bay Area youth pair with professional game developers to prototype science-themed games

SAN FRANCISCO (April 20, 2015)—Local teenagers are redefining “weekend gaming” in Golden Gate Park. On Sunday, April 26, the California Academy of Sciences will host its first [Science Game Jam](#) in collaboration with partners from the Bay Area gaming community, including [Zynga.org](#), [GlassLab](#), and [Roblox](#). In the professional realm, game jams are gatherings of game developers racing the clock to design exciting, innovative games in a short amount of time. By blending science learning with this creative, fast-paced approach to game design, the Academy’s [Digital Learning](#) program aims to expose youth to science-rich experiences in an all-new format.

Hold for quote from Katie: this should be about our goal with the event, and something about the value of this type of science exposure for young folks. A mention about how special it is to have professional volunteers would be great as well. Are we able to say something about our hopes this will be the start of a new game jam tradition/series at the Academy?

After applying online, 50 teenagers were admitted to the Academy’s inaugural Game Jam. Upon arrival, teens will break into small groups and explore the fascinating biology behind some of Earth’s largest creatures: whales. Groups will work together—with support from professional mentors—to imagine a thrilling, educational game that engages users with the science behind these giants of the deep. Teen participants will develop storyboards about their games, and present their products on the Academy’s public floor at the end of the day.

Hold for quote from Katie: Something about the Academy’s commitment to science exploration, especially using creative entry-points like gaming. You sent the following in a recent email—can you say anything exciting about how we hope other museums will copy this model? “We see our April Jam as the beginnings of a program niche that will serve thousands, either through direct participation in game design, as a result of dissemination of Academy youth games in educational settings, or following our toolkit model of how museums can use this approach.”

Professional volunteers from the Bay Area’s vibrant gaming community will work closely with each small group, walking teens through the process of planning and storyboarding to create one immersive, coherent gaming experience.

Developers from Zynga—a leading social gaming company headquartered in San Francisco—will join representatives from educational-gaming giant GlassLab and user-generated gaming experts from Roblox to lend support and give participants a peek into

the professional world of game design. These volunteer mentors will encourage teens to push through roadblocks as a team, while helping groups stay hyper-focused on creating engaging science content with wide gaming-appeal.

Hold for quote from Zynga.org or Margaret Ng?

The Academy, along with its partners, will continue to explore the intersection of youth empowerment, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) learning, and game design. Science Game Jam targets 13 to 18 year-olds at critical developmental moment when exposure to science—both formally and informally—can create a rich, lifelong interest in a variety of fields. Representatives from the Bay Area’s gaming community are stepping-up to help extend this valuable science and technology exposure to the next generation of potential scientists and developers.

This month’s Science Game Jam is an extension of the Academy’s innovative [Digital Learning](#) program. Since 2011, this initiative has pioneered youth programs that combine science exploration, digital media, and the power of youth voice. Digital Learning programming uses cutting-edge technology to inspire young people to be science communicators and civic leaders. Youth are encouraged to practice leadership, collaboration, and design-thinking while learning valuable workplace skills from the scientific, technology, and creative professionals of the Academy and its partners. The program provides youth a forum—on the museum floor, in Bay Area communities, and on various digital platforms and online channels—to share their digital science stories with maximum impact.

About [Science Game Jam](#)

Sunday, April 26

Closed workshop from 9:30 AM-4 PM

Public presentations from 4-5 PM

The workshop is restricted to teen participants, volunteer mentors, and press. The public may view prototype presentations in the Academy’s Piazza starting at 4 PM.

About the California Academy of Sciences

The California Academy of Sciences is a leading scientific and cultural institution based in San Francisco. It is home to an aquarium, planetarium, natural history museum and research and education programs, which engage people of all ages and backgrounds on two of the most important topics of our time: life and its sustainability. Founded in 1853, the Academy's mission is to explore, explain and protect the natural world. Visit www.calacademy.org for more information.

###