

2024



THE PRACTICE SPACE
ANNUAL REPORT



EVOLVING
TOGETHER

**AnnMarie
Baines, PhD**

**Founder &
Executive Director**



LETTER FROM
LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

When I think about 2024, I think about how much we evolved to reaffirm our commitment to the communities we serve. We continue to be about creating inclusive spaces to speak and helping people develop communication skills and build confidence in the face of personal and systemic barriers. Now, we have strengthened the connection between communication skill development and preparing people to be caring and effective leaders who are ready for life.

We evolved our programs to deepen skills around persuasive speaking, storytelling, and debate, helping youth and adult leaders connect with their audiences on topics important to them. We evolved our vision and plan to reach more communities in Northern California, while keeping our West Contra Costa home base strong. We evolved our ability to track our impact. We evolved our team of staff and coaches to have the training, clarity, and culture needed to advance our new values. We got stronger as an organization.

We evolved because we wanted to take our nonprofit to the next level, but we also evolved because we had to. It is hard to be a nonprofit of our size: big enough to have a lot of reach and high-quality services, but not quite big enough to attract the funding and support needed to expand further. As a founder, I am deeply proud of our success to date. I am absolutely certain that people need the skills, community, safety, and care that we provide. But, we are still a small organization up against big threats to our mission. We are simultaneously faced with working hard to grow, but also stay alive in the current climate.

As we enter 2025, we need your help to continue our growth.
#1: We need to spread awareness about The Practice Space.
#2: We need to grow our base of supporters who get involved with our work, from donating to volunteering. We couldn't have gotten this far without people who believed in us and the power of voice, and hope you can help us make more friends.

Onward.

AnnMarie Baines



AT A GLANCE

WHO WE SERVE & WHY

OUR MISSION is to build confidence and community through communication skill development to advance equity, create inclusive environments, and elevate systemically marginalized voices.



954

Participants Served



- 64% Youth
- 36% Adults

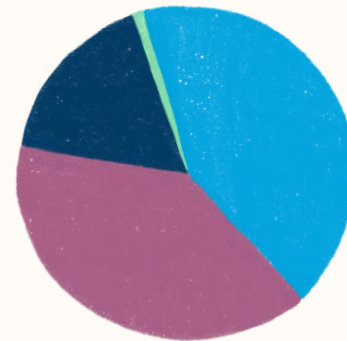
80%

students
identify as
BIPOC



"When I first started, every time I would get on a stage I would feel scared or nervous. but it's a lot easier when you go to places like The Practice Space who teach you how to feel natural..."

-Nora Garcia, Young Speaker



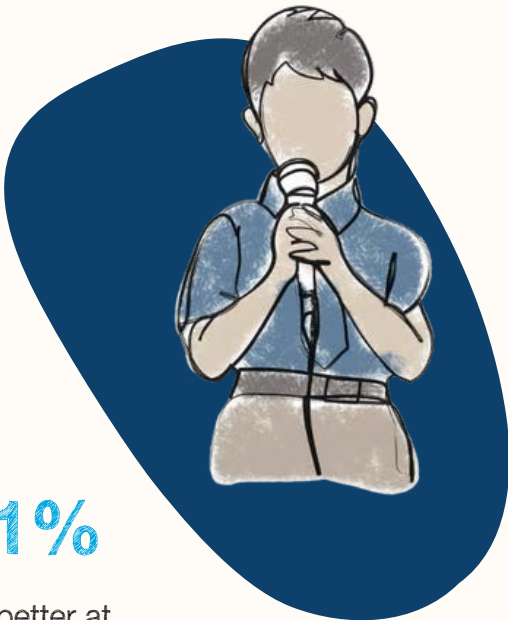
- 43% women
- <1% nonbinary
- 39% men
- 17% not noted

EVOLVING TO SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION

AWARD-WINNING K-12 WORK

As one of our core values, cultivating joy lies at the heart of all that we do. Walk into a room full of our participants in grades K-8, buzzing with excitement and ideas for pitching imaginary inventions and 3-point speeches on why we should have 4-day school weeks – the joy can be felt everywhere.

Our K-8 programming for emerging leaders cultivates a zone of safety, fun, and friendship that children not only crave, but find essential as they plant the seeds of who they want to be, process their world, and dream of the future they want to live in. And—according to their parents—the effects are tangible!



81%

felt better at
speaking in a group
even when nervous



“Magic ingredients that make The Practice Space special are the amazing community, the ways they encourage you to push yourself outta your comfort zone and it's just fun!”

-Salome Vargas, Young Speaker

“After more than three years of support through TPS, my daughter has felt confident to stand up in front of both peers and adults to speak about issues that are important to her and to commemorate important events (like her elementary school graduation)...Her self-confidence and self-esteem have blossomed under the supportive coaching of TPS staff.”

-Salome's Mother



Celebrating Our Alumni

Through our signature speech and debate programming, our high school students grow into themselves as people and speakers. Their own version of creative and persuasive self expression comes alive when given the chance to mentor others. As an accomplished poet and coach at Loma Vista in Vallejo, American Canyon student Camren Lipson has leaned into that growth since his very first practice.

“As a speaker, I have been immersed in a wide variety of events including skits, plays, and debates. Through those events I have competed and won at a national level in addition to being published.

Before TPS, I didn’t know anything about lesson planning, engaging students, or even how to create an agenda. Since joining - through help from the other coach and the students themselves - they have taught me how to teach. I’m not for sure what is next to come, but I want to do whatever I can to use my voice and help others discover theirs.”

*-Camren Lipson, TPS Coach
& 2025 graduate*

**Congratulations
to our 2024
graduates!**



We are incredibly proud of all of our 2024 program graduates, who model daily the community of practice we are always evolving towards! Together, they help us envision a world where youth of all ages can feel at home in their power and passionate about mobilizing that power to lift up those around them.

Student Leaders who Light the Way

Once students find their own voice, the effect is contagious, particularly because of their desire to share the experience with peers. Across our school sites, student leaders like Ayushree Dahal confirm how vital it is that they and their peers learn to express themselves freely and with confidence. In doing so, they become stronger advocates for the people, places, and communities they care about most:

“It's critical for me to have a team at my school because of the number of underrepresented voices present...Debate as an activity is not very diverse but our school is, it's important to me to develop community advocates who actually represent the communities they advocate for.

I strongly believe that a world with civil discourse is a better world, and if I can create an activity that is inclusive, exciting, and creates future leaders I've done my job at leaving the world slightly better than I found it.”

-Ayushree Dahal, San Leandro HS Captain



First YST On the Books



Our Inaugural Young Speakers Tournament was a huge success. **Over 50 kids ages 8-11 from different schools got to build community**, cheer one another on, and participate with confidence and joy in a half a day's worth of competitive public speaking, giving speeches about problems they want to solve, stories they wrote, and arguments they created.



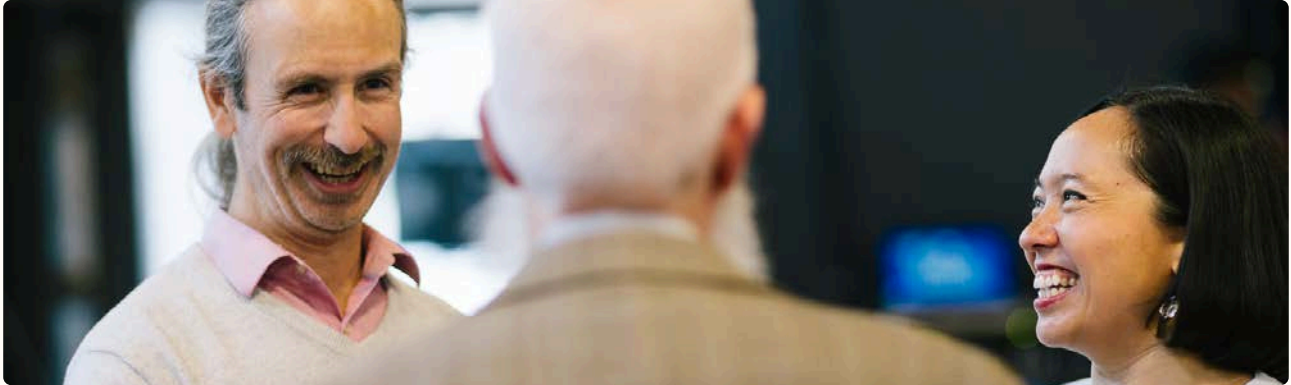
Proud to Be Richmond's Best



Votes are in - we're proud to be Richmond's "Best Summer Camp"! **Over 20,000 Richmond residents and businesses cast their votes in the city's first "Best of" competition**, nominating Our Young Speakers' Camp as Richmond's best summer camp! Participants in our 2024 camp had a blast exploring their own voice and finding inspiration in lessons shared from our community leader guest speakers.

EVOLVING TO SUPPORT LEADERS IN THE BAY & BEYOND

COACHING & COMMUNITY PARTNERS



We are fortunate to continue to attract local nonprofits and businesses partners who share our vision of providing equitable access to education that promotes healthy communication and authentic expression - so that employees can bring their fullest selves to the work at hand.

The top four competencies our partners desired out of our 2024 professional development offerings included being able to:



1 Comfortably & confidently tell their story & professional journey



2 Build Staff Capacity to pitch organizations and present compelling, authentic, engaging content



3 Advocate for their schools and communities



4 Provide dynamic, project-based learning to students



Kaiser Permanente

As we enter our 4th year with the Kaiser Permanente Elevate Program, we celebrate working with more than 300 Kaiser leaders to express their personal visions of leadership with confidence and authenticity. As one of our original “leadership collaboratives”, our team of coaches come in towards the end of their year-long fellowship to support the preparation and presentation of final speeches about leadership.

“When researching Public Speaking vendors, [The Practice Space] were the only ones who could concretely answer how to develop public speaking skills in our participants without upholding socialized values that continue to oppress marginalized voices. Our participants left the workshop feeling inspired, confident, and prepared to embrace their true and authentic voice. The coaches they brought on to support the workshop were spectacular.

This is a partnership that I am proud to continue with. This work has helped us to empower our leaders to liberate themselves from dominant narratives that have silenced them for too long.”

-Julianna, Kaiser Permanente

Capital Group

We are honored and thrilled to have launched our partnership with Capital Group! We have worked in partnership with their team and the Foundation for Financial Planning to launch their Community Wealth Council. Together, we are designing an adaptable financial literacy curriculum that promotes community voice and equips nonprofit leaders with the mindsets and skills necessary to be able to develop programs at their respective organizations. The programs developed by nonprofit participants will support their communities towards the life outcomes that come with financial freedom and health.



Private Lessons

Our senior public speaking coaches continue to work hard to provide high-quality, responsive lessons to individuals from a variety of backgrounds. These 1-on-1 sessions feature exercises and feedback that are tailored to the specific goals, learning preferences, storytelling style, and unique identities of our participants:

“Since my first session, my coach, Maribel Lopez took time to understand my cultural context and the dynamics that shaped and impacted my willingness to engage in public speaking. As a young black woman in predominately non-black spaces, I’ve often felt silenced, leading little opportunity to develop or sharpen my public speaking skills...The resources, tools, and guidance provided were not one-size-fits-all, but instead tailored for me.

Now, I will not say that I don’t stumble over my words or get anxious before speaking to a crowd, but I have tools and resources that feel comfortable to reference and use in my current role and beyond.”

-Maya, Private Lesson Student

30+

total partners
served in 2024



**This was also our
3rd year supporting
YES Nature to Neighborhoods
for a community panel about
youth mental health and wellness!**



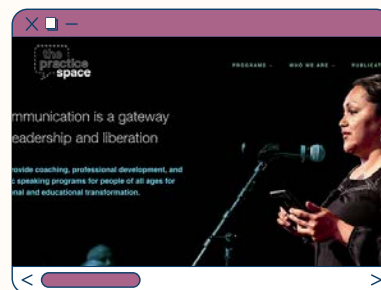
EVOLVING OUR TEAM & VISION

SUPPORTING TEAM LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS



Team Capacity Building

Our programs stand on strong infrastructure, which was made possible by our extensive capacity-building work in 2024. We hired four new team members and built out a series of essential systems. This included a performance management and feedback process, financial review preparation, and an in-depth data structure. Together, this gives us the stability, freedom, and direction to make high quality programming available to a wider audience.



Our New Website

Our new website allows visitors to explore our evolution with ease. With a few simple clicks, visitors can now understand the foundations of who we are and why our work matters, what our services look like in action, and how to get involved in our community and events!! A huge thank you to long-time partner, Sara Waters Design Group, for their hard work on this project.



93%

report feeling
cared for by
their coach

The Coaches That Make This Possible

Our lead and assistant coaches are the backbone of our ability to reach students in a meaningful way! They do an incredible job facilitating fun & engaging weekly program sessions and building trusting relationships w/students, families, school personnel, & TPS staff. Tatiana Fakoukaki is one such light for students at both Kennedy High School (where she leads debate programming) and Richmond High School (where she coaches the Spanish-Language Speech and Debate team):

“Starting my journey as a coach, I thought I needed to have minute-by-minute curriculum and do such a diligent job passing on as much information as possible to them. Every session, I would prove myself wrong, not because I was too ambitious, but because the students taught me to find the magic in simplicity. We keep our engagement consistent, choose something we care about, play, and get as deep as we can with the debate tools we have.

To empower a community you need to start with the student voice. I’m glad I get to equip these students with the tools to speak their mind and become good listeners and leaders.”

*-Tatiana Fakouki, Coach
& Jr. Board Member*





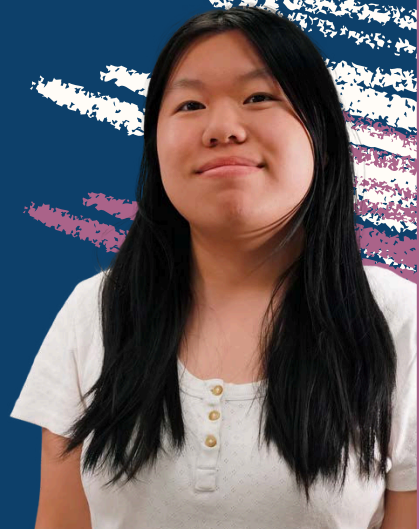
Junior Board Leadership

Our incredible Junior Board of Directors is composed of current and former participants ages 15-24 who meet monthly with staff to inform important changes to curriculum, outreach, and events. In 2024, the Junior Board gathered stakeholders from all across our community to raise funds and excitement for our programming through The Practice Space's inaugural Legacy Dinner event. They also formalized a public speaking "rulebook" for students and families looking to participate in Practice Space events.

"As a girl who will be the first to go to college in my family, it's really meaningful that I am able to contribute to The Practice Space."

As a co-chair of the Junior Board, I work directly on creating meeting agendas so we can talk about meaningful things that The Practice Space is doing, but also how us as the Junior Board can contribute by completing outreach initiatives and creating new curriculum that directly impact students that are my age or even younger than me. I think it's really special that I can erase or lessen barriers for people in education to find their voice and feel very confident."

-Bethany Zhao, 2024 Junior Board Member



The Practice Space in New Orleans

Former student, Junior Board member, and coach, Mistura Bankole, joined our Executive Director at the 2024 Aurora Institute Symposium in New Orleans, with over 1,000 K-12 innovators advancing competency-based, and future-focused learning design. Mistura and AnnMarie co-presented a session on the vital role that voice plays in finding and leveraging individual and collective power.

EVOLVING OUR REACH

CREATING OUR 2025 - 2029 STRATEGIC PLAN

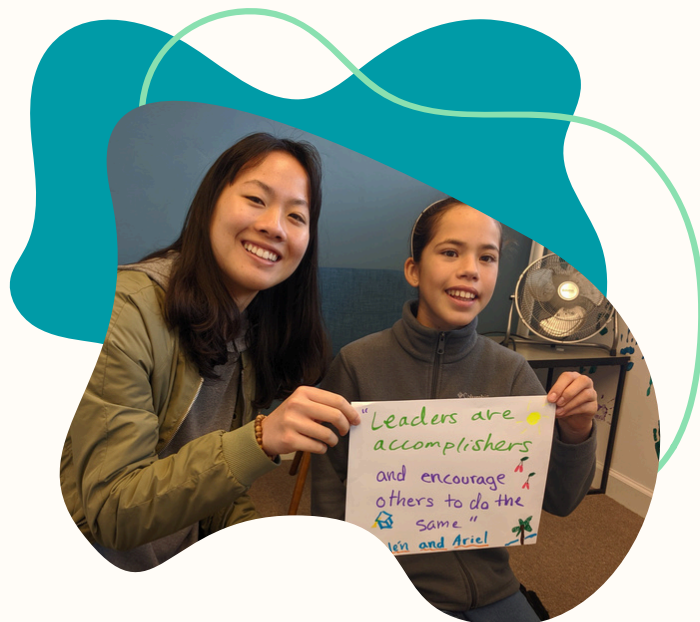
In 2024, we completed the strategic plan that will guide our organization's over the next five years. The crafting process was highly collaborative, and we consulted the expertise of members from all corners of our community. We learned more about the values we need to uphold as we scale our work to solve the problem of silencing in our communities and challenges with student and family engagement and belonging in our schools. We clarified our program language and approach to meeting people where they are, including expanding our offerings to activate and transform communication skills. Our plan focuses on improving communication skills to strengthen leadership and career/life readiness. Our plan prioritizes the following strategic goals:

(1) **Expand our youth services throughout Northern California**

(2) **Establish and Embed our communication skills-building curriculum into leadership collaboratives nationwide**

(3) **Strengthen the community, identity, and awareness of our organization as a whole**

(4) **Continue to invest in internal infrastructure**



Expanding Youth Services Near & Far

Our youth services team has already been hard at work deepening our roots in West Contra Costa while nourishing new roots and regional programming in Alameda, Napa, Solano, and Yolo Counties. We concluded 2024 with being awarded an exciting three-year grant from Richmond Fund for Children and Youth to sustain extensive leadership and mentorship supports for Richmond youth and families. We expanded our work in Yolo County as we conducted storytelling workshops to produce a podcast for Davis Unified about youth experiences with bias in school. We look towards the next few years eager to become the best version of ourselves and we are grateful for the people and partnerships that make this evolution possible.

"There are many vehicles to advance racial equity — public speaking is ours. Every time someone tells a meaningful story, presents their ideas on a stage, or learns to debate an issue that's really important to them, we access a little bit of that power within."

-AnnMarie Baines, Founder & Executive Director



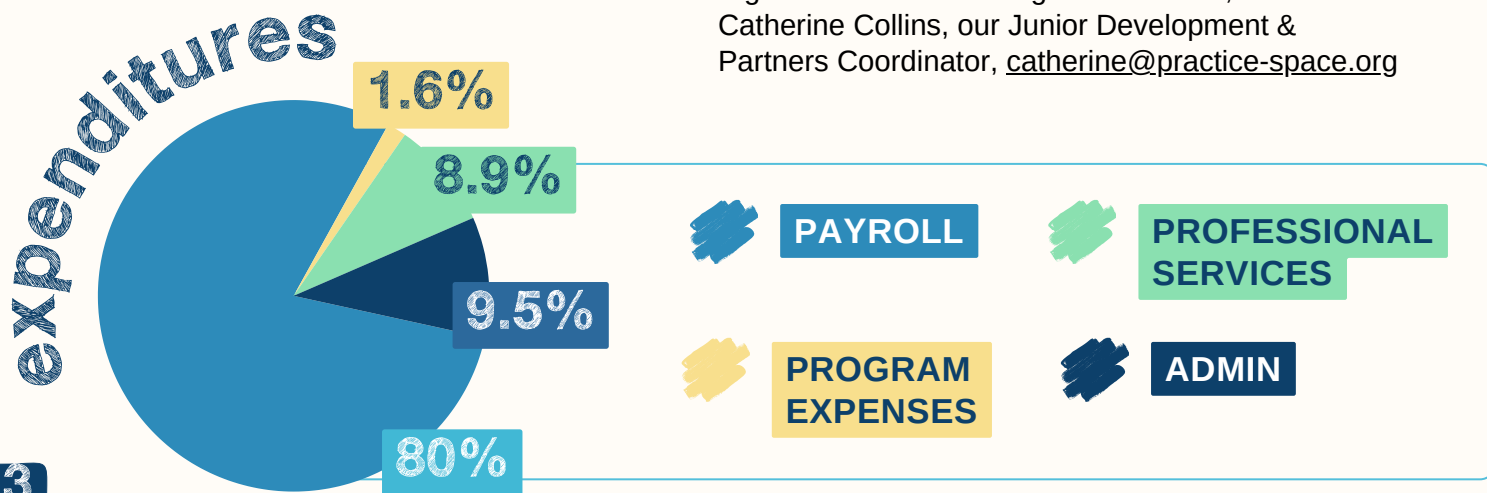
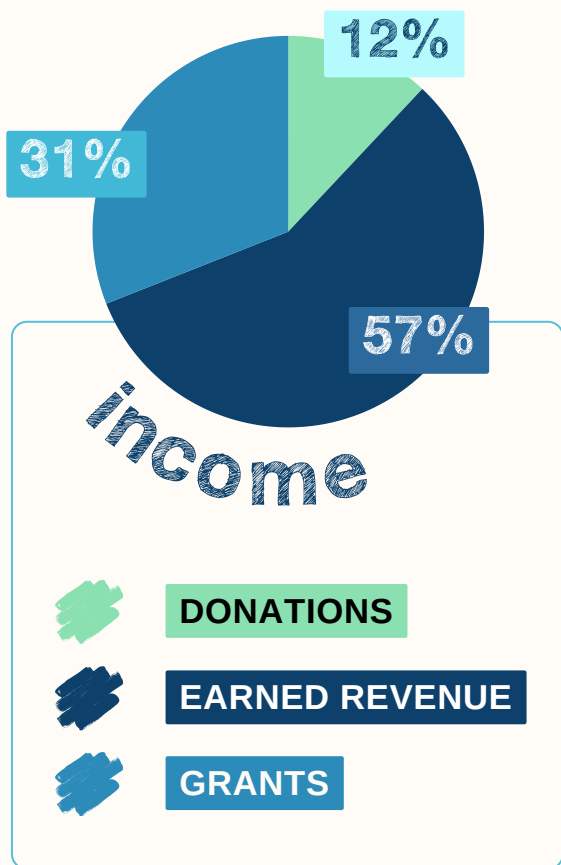
STRATEGIC GROWTH & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

2024 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

The sustainability of our work relies on a diverse mix of funding sources. Our earned revenue from mission-aligned partnerships for adult programming and school district work helps make our work sustainable for our communities. Our philanthropic funders support our ability to grow and serve more participants as well as supporting staff capacity to provide high-quality programs. And of course, our individual giving ensures that we can support a variety of program-specific needs and allows us to stay focused on advancing our mission.

In the last year, our incredible donor base (many of whom have been with us since our inception) and community-first funders like the Hewlett Foundation, McMicking Foundation, Quest Foundation, the Chamberlin Foundation, Title Nine Womens Fund, the City of Richmond, Society of Community Work, and New Schools Venture Fund, have allowed our programs to truly serve the needs of our participants and communities. As we look towards the future, we are particularly excited to pursue opportunities for our team to grow our work to support civic engagement and youth leadership, as well as conduct research that will allow us to understand the impact of our programming on leadership, belonging, and life/career success.

To learn more about our goals, and opportunities to organize resources alongside our team, reach out to Catherine Collins, our Junior Development & Partners Coordinator, catherine@practice-space.org



STAFF & BOARD UPDATES

NEW FACES, SAME HEART



Our approach is all about doing serious work with great joy.

This value is reflected every day in the adaptability, creativity, and dedication of our staff and Board. It is our pleasure and honor to grow this incredible team through the addition of five new members in 2024:



Ryan Miller
Coordinator of Programs



Aliza Heslop
Manager of Talent



Catherine Collins
Junior Development & Partnerships Coordinator



Taylor Berberich
Junior Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Dr. Paul Porter
*Board of Directors
(Director of DEI at the National Speech & Debate Association)*





TPS Staff

AnnMarie Baines | Founder & Executive Director

Maribel Lopez | Senior Director of Programs

Moneek Bhanot | Director of Strategic Initiatives

Caitlin Healy | Manager of Learning & Impact

Aliza Heslop | Manager of Talent

Cynthia Pinto | Manager of Programs & Events

Ryan Miller | Coordinator of Programs

Taylor Berberich | Jr. Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Catherine Collins | Jr. Development & Partnerships Coordinator

TPS Board of Directors

Jessie Stewart | Board President

Lorna Contreras-Townsend | Vice-President

Sylvia Sudat | Secretary

Paul Baines | Treasurer

Rashon Lane | Director

Paul Porter | Director

Todd Groves | Director

Jade Shipman | Director

Angel Ward-Jackson | Director

AnnMarie Baines | Director

Follow our evolution:

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www.practice-space.org

