Social Justice Advocacy Role:

1) Raising awareness
Injustice must be perceived to be acted upon. Often those experiencing injustice do not perceive it as such because of a lack of information about possibilities or conditions elsewhere or a lack of agreement on what the standards of justice are. A first step in social justice advocacy is therefore to raise consciousness about injustices both among those affected and the broader public, to help those experiencing injustice become aware of their situation and of the options for change, and to make others aware of the consequences that prevailing injustices are having.

2) Researching the root causes of injustice
Raising awareness about the existence of inequalities and inequities is only a first step toward effective social justice advocacy. Equally important is to identify the root causes of these inequities. This frequently requires careful fact-gathering and research as well as careful analysis of results. And such research is often best carried out in a participatory fashion, in cooperation with the people affected.

3) Disseminating findings
Facts do not often speak for themselves. They must be interpreted and disseminated. Evidence of inequality and understandings of its causes must therefore be disseminated to those directly affected so that people come to understand the link between the injustices they experience and the advocacy efforts required to correct them. But dissemination must also reach beyond those directly affected to the broader public. This makes development of an independent mass media and the effective use of the mass media a critical part of successful social justice advocacy.

4) Creating capacity
Effective advocacy requires concrete skills and solid organization. The precise nature of these skills will vary from place to place. But almost everywhere they will include familiarity with the local context, an ability to relate to grassroots communities, effective communications skills, knowledge of public decision mechanisms, access to communications technology, an ability to mobilize people and resources, and an understanding of how to build effective organizations.

5) Building networks and partnerships
Advocacy is most effective when done through networks. Networks allow organizations to multiply their power and their resources.

6) Influencing decisions
The implementation of social justice advocacy can take a variety of forms. These can include modeling change through pilot programs, organizing public forums, conducting information campaigns, grassroots organizing, issuing reports, writing opinion articles in the media, testifying before government agencies, meeting with government officials, and forming community partnerships and initiatives.

7) Monitoring outcomes
Social justice advocacy does not end with the making of decisions. The consequences of these decisions must also be carefully monitored and the results of this monitoring fed back into the advocacy process.

For more information and resources about building personal and organizational capacity, contact Leslie Wong, Center for Multicultural Affairs, or via email at Leslie.Wong@colorado.edu
### Diversity
This perspective sees people as individuals, rather than as members of groups with defined social identities. The diversity perspective states that we are all diverse—our multiple identities are unique to us and have an equal value, but usually is equated with race, specifically Black and White.

### Multiculturalism
Takes into account that although we are unique, we do have to acknowledge that we have different culture norms, values, culture, and context.

### Social Justice
"engages all differences, while recognizing the elements of power and privilege." Social justice takes diversity and multiculturalism to the next level, asking how does your unique self (diversity) with all its cultural norms and contexts (multiculturalism) affect others. Social Justice encourages learning of self as well as learning about others. Social Justice also allows a broader definition of diversity to include other subordinate groups/social categories, such as queer (GLBT), religion, socio-economic status, and citizenship.

---

"Social justice is definitionally complex; it ignites controversy, is not neutral, and varies by person, culture, social class, gender, context, space and time. Furthermore, social justice cannot be reified nor can it be traced to any one particular location because the definition localizes in the individual or in a collective, not in any governmental policy (Miller, 2010). We recognize that many people committed to social justice live a life that extends the following beliefs to outside of school contexts…..we further recognize that a commitment to enacting social justice in schools is activist-oriented."  
*Excerpted and adapted from Beliefs about Social Justice in English Education. National Council of Teachers of English, 2009.*

---

### What is a social justice framework?

According to Marilyn Cochran-Smith, a leading scholar in education, a social justice framework is one that "actively addresses the dynamics of oppression, privilege, and isms, and recognizes that society is the product of historically rooted, institutionally sanctioned stratification along socially constructed group lines that include race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability (among others). Working for social justice means guiding others and being guided in critical self-reflection about the socialization into the matrix of unequal relationships and its implications, analysis of the mechanisms of oppression, and the ability to challenge these hierarchies.

Basically, a social justice framework is a way of seeing and acting aimed at resisting unfairness and inequity while enhancing freedom and possibility for all. It pays primary attention to how people, policies, practices, curricula, and institutions may be used to liberate rather than oppress those least served by our decision-making. Some examples (there are many more, some of which are contested) of principles guiding social justice work in education including the belief that:

- Schools often reproduce rather than remedy the patterns of social exclusion and oppression seen in the larger society.
- There are very real differentials in access to social and institutional power between relationally positioned group members, and those differentials exist in education settings.
- While all people have socialized prejudices and can discriminate, only the dominant group is backed by social and institutional power, which is multi-dimensional and constantly operating, being contested, and renegotiated, especially within schools.
- Those who claim to be for social justice must also be engaged in self-reflection on their own socialization into patterns of oppression and continually seek to counter those patterns. This is a lifelong project and is not achieved at the completion of an article, workshop, or conference.

*Adapted from Sensoy, O. and DiAngelo, R (2009). Developing social justice literacy: An open letter to our faculty colleagues.*