

You are enough. You are not alone.



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These phrases are for YOU. It's spring and, let's be real, you have a TON on your plate. For everyone one of us, the load is slightly different. For everyone of us, the need to know we're enough for whatever our tasks are in the coming weeks, days, or hours is present. So know this- today- you, as you are, are enough. You, as you are, are not alone. You, as you are, are loved.

My colleague Rick and I have incorporated these messages into the heart of our program at Coon Rapids High School. It started with a simple idea years ago- what if the center of our program could be love? What kind of culture would that create? What kind of support would that provide for our student population? How could the practice of saying this out loud influence our daily work? What we found is that our young singers demonstrate higher levels of empathy and care for each other and their community. This binds them together in a special way and creates more meaningful experiences.

One thing this practice has not changed is how well our choir sings in tune. Or whether they watch all the time. Or whether they always put their cell phone away. But we are more in tune with each other. And they watch one another differently. This kind of emotional education is already built into what we do and yet we cannot ignore the power and importance of this part of our job. As we teach all the skills necessary to bring a text and musical line to life, we cannot forget to care and nurture the people creating the experience.

As ACDA-MN looks to embrace the future, I want to challenge us with the idea that love has the power to create the positive change we seek. This is true in every choral rehearsal as much as it is for any organization. In a recent conversation with my sister about organizational management, she shared a phrase with me that has guided her work in the environmental justice realm: We intentionally try to grow power from love. She talked about how, as a manager, she is intentional in structuring meetings to allow for time for everyone in the room to connect and breathe. She intentionally invites the whole person into goal setting and job performance discussions with her employees. She intentionally holds conversations with her co-director on a regular basis about keeping love at the center of the organization.

After thinking, ?OMG. I wish you were my boss!?! I started to think about how much of what we do as choral educators reflects this same practice. We have carefully planned ?meetings? with our singers. We have a choice to invite the whole being into rehearsal or

simply ask their voice to perform magic on its own. We can intentionally engage in teaching and sharing love, or we can hope it simply appears.

Let's be real again- there are many days I need someone to remind me that I'm not alone and I'm enough. Luckily, I have colleagues and students who care enough to notice when I need to hear it. In the past years, I can say with absolute surety that love has changed the way I teach. Love has changed the way I create music. Love has changed the way students invest in our program. Teaching love has changed me.

I encourage you to try it. Take our phrases. Share them with your singers. Encourage your singers to share them with the world around them. We say our phrases every Friday to every choir. Sometimes we elaborate. Sometimes we yell it at them really fast as they leave the classroom because the bell rang. Always, it matters.

You are not alone.

You are enough.

You are loved. Actually, I think I can also safely say, You are love.

Share the message.