



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 11, 2018

Conflict Over District's "Transgender" Student Policy Led to Firing, Teacher Claims

An Indiana teacher says he lost his job after he refused to follow his school district's policy concerning "transgender" students — those who claim the gender opposite of their biological sex.

John Kluge, who has served as an orchestra teacher at Brownsburg, Indiana's high school for the last four years, says that the school district requires teachers to call transgender students by their gender-preference names rather than their birth names — a policy Kluge says violates his religious convictions, as well as his First Amendment free speech guarantees.



Kluge said the policy forced him to "encourage students in what I believe is something that's a dangerous lifestyle." He added, "I'm fine to teach students with other beliefs, but the fact that teachers are being compelled to speak a certain way is the scary thing."

While the Brownsburg school district said that the 28-year-old Kluge willingly submitted his resignation, Kluge insists he only submitted a tentative resignation because the district had threatened to fire him with only three weeks remaining in the school year — assumedly over his refusal to follow the district's transgender student policy.

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As reported by the *Indianapolis Star*, Kluge "handed in a letter of resignation with instructions not to submit the letter until May 29, after the school year ended. On May 25, the last student day at Brownsburg Schools, Kluge said he asked to withdraw the letter."

Instead, according to Kluge, immediately after he submitted his "tentative" resignation, the district locked him out of his school e-mail and posted his teaching position on its employment site. "They're acting as if I have resigned," Kluge said, "even though ... I still want to work here."

According to the district's transgender policy guide, published by the conservative [Indiana Family Institute](#), a transgender student at Brownsburg High School must have written consent from both parents, as well as a doctor, before teachers and staff are required to call the student by a transgender name rather than a birth name.

Earlier in the school year, Kluge had reached an agreement with the school district that allowed him to call all students — transgender and otherwise — by their last names as a compromise to the controversial policy. "Kluge said it seemed like a fine compromise," reported the *Indianapolis Star*. "He did not explain to students why he only used last names this past year. 'I wanted to present an environment where I wasn't going to push one way or the other,' he said."

But later in the year, the district told Kluge that he would not be allowed to use last names with



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students in the next school year, a decision that led to an impasse with the district and his apparent job termination.

The Indiana Family Institute is supporting Kluge in his efforts to retain his teaching position, and has launched a [letter-writing campaign](#) urging concerned citizens to e-mail Brownsburg school board members and ask them to allow Kluge to return to his teaching position next year.

In a statement Kluge said, "I view my responsibility to students in my community as more than just helping them become the best musicians they can be, though I certainly devote a considerable amount of time and effort to that worthy goal. I wish to remain a teacher in good standing with the administration. However, as much as I love my job and would desire to keep it, I cannot take actions that could encourage harm to the students in my care and provide a poor example for others. I ultimately must submit my conscience to a higher authority."

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