

Tying evaluations to charters

Flanagan offers 'comprehensive' education plan

BY YANCEY ROY
yancey.roy@newsday.com

ALBANY — A week before the State Legislature adjourns, Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan unveiled a proposal Tuesday that would give schoolteachers more favorable terms on evaluations and tenure — in exchange for a significant increase in the number of charter schools.

The state's largest teachers' union and the Democratic-led state Assembly, which have opposed charter school expansion, immediately panned the plan.

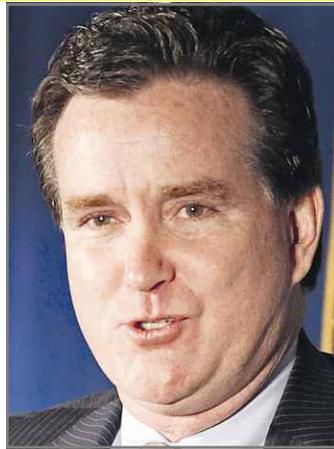
Flanagan (R-East Northport)

said he was offering a "comprehensive" education bill to address several longtime issues, not just teacher evaluations. The fight over evaluations has been one of the few high-profile issues dominating the final weeks of the legislative session.

With adjournment looming, Flanagan's proposal could set parameters for negotiations or signal that the issues are dead for the year.

His bill calls for decoupling teacher evaluation from student scores on standardized state tests — showing, he said, Republicans are "listening to the opt-out movement on Long Island and elsewhere." The measure also calls for reducing teachers' probationary period from four years to three, allowing them to apply for tenure after that.

Flanagan tied those proposals with another that would raise the limit on the number



WILLIAM PERLMAN

Flanagan's proposal to Senate

of charter schools from 460 to 560 and do away with a regional cap that had limited the number downstate.

"We are also listening to parents who are demanding more choices for their children by in-

creasing the number of charter schools in New York City, where nearly 50,000 children are currently stuck on waiting lists, hoping and praying for their shot at a first-class education, and decreasing the number of charters upstate where the need isn't as great," Flanagan said in a statement.

The New York State United Teachers and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie (D-Bronx) consider the inclusion of charter schools in the bill a "poison pill" and said teacher evaluations should be treated as a stand-alone issue.

"I may have been born at night, but it wasn't last night," NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said.

A spokesman for Heastie noted the Assembly already has approved a bill to de-emphasize the link between standardized tests and teachers' evaluations — an initiative Gov. Andrew M.

Cuomo pushed through in 2015.

Heastie spokesman Michael Whyland called on the GOP-led Senate to follow suit. "If they were truly interested in ending unnecessary testing, the Senate could just pass the bill that already passed the Assembly," Whyland said.

Cuomo signed a law that strongly tied teacher evaluations to students' scores on state standardized tests three years ago. Facing a backlash, the state Board of Regents — New York's education policy board — placed a four-year moratorium on the use of the evaluation system.

Leaders of the opt-out movement have said the Assembly bill de-emphasizing test scores doesn't go far enough and want a full repeal.

The legislative session is scheduled to end next Wednesday.

5 students, aide hurt as minibus hits house

BY JANELLE GRIFFITH
janelle.griffith@newsday.com

A mini-school-bus driver had a medical emergency and crashed into a North Amityville home Tuesday morning, injuring five elementary schoolchildren and an aide on the bus, and jolting the family inside the house, police and witnesses said.

The bus pushed two parked vehicles forward before slamming into the house about 7:45 a.m., police said, shaking the structure.

Gabriella Collado, 27, said she was sleeping when the bus hit her home on County Line Road at the intersection with Ritter Avenue. The impact threw her across her bedroom. She was shaken, but not injured.

"All I heard was the boom," she said. "It hit us so hard that everything got moved. All I did was scream, grab my son, and cry."

When she went to see what had happened, she found the driver "still in the bus, and the children were on the ground."

The driver was taken to Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center in West Islip and was in stable condition, Suffolk County police said.

The five children, students in the Amityville school district, and the aide were all taken to the same hospital to be evaluated and treated for minor injuries, police and officials said.

The bus was headed to the Western Suffolk BOCES James E. Allen Elementary School in Dix Hills, said Amityville Superintendent Mary Kelly. Parents were notified, she said.

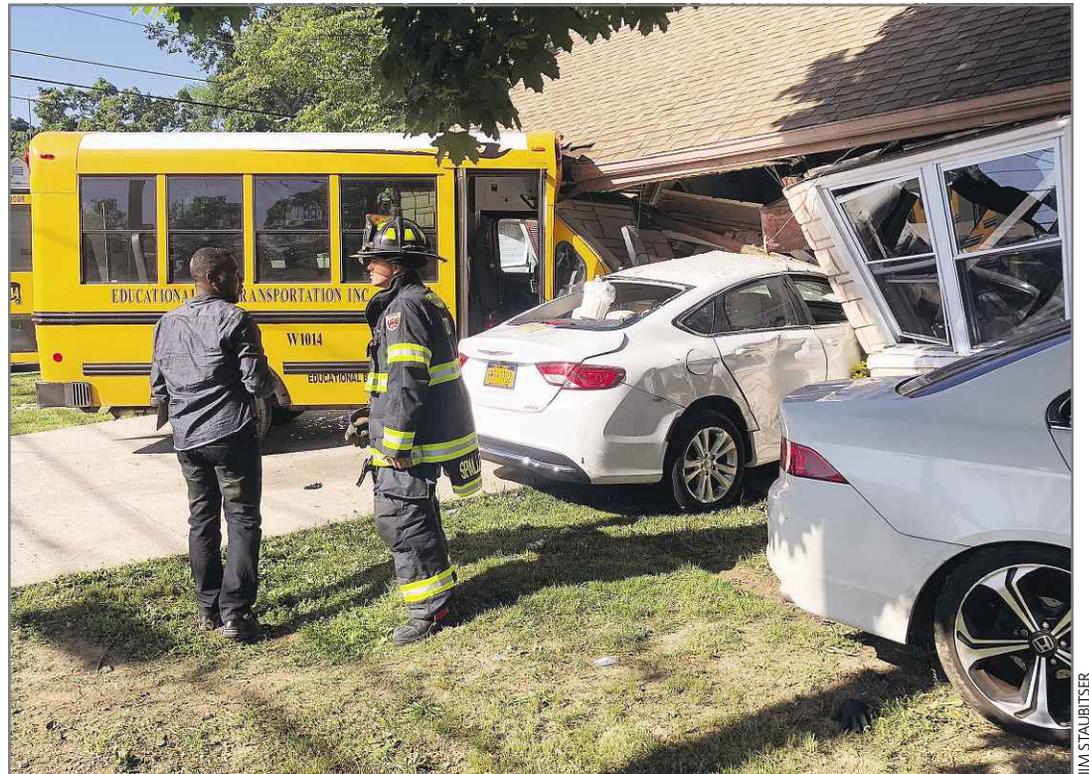
"The safety of our students is our top priority," Kelly said in a statement. Educational Bus Transportation Inc. of Copiague owns the bus, which is not a district bus, she said.

"The driver, who suffered an unforeseen medical incident, was in full compliance with all state laws and company regulations regarding physical examinations, and her last road observation was conducted in February," Educational Bus spokeswoman Katherine Heaviside said in a statement.

The statement did not identify the driver.

"The safety of our passengers is our paramount concern," Heaviside said.

Collado's mother, Eugenia Collado, 61, rents the damaged



The scene on County Line Road in North Amityville, where a school bus rammed a house Tuesday.

home, where the family has lived for nearly two years.

Kevin Bonner, a Town of Babylon spokesman, said the house has been declared uninhabitable.

Eugenia Collado was in the living room at the time of the crash while her sons, Jesus, 29, and Odris, 32, and Gab-

riella Collado's son, Jeremiah, 4, were asleep.

Eugenia Collado, like her daughter, was thrown across the room by the impact.

The mother was crying outside the home with bits of dry-wall throughout her hair and a scrape on her eyebrow. She said she had pain in her foot

and back. Minutes later, she got into an ambulance to be taken to Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center.

The mother was the only resident evaluated, Gabriella Collado said.

"Thank God," she said, "we're all alive."

With William Murphy