

## Rome, Floyd schools do well in climate rankings

• Every Rome and Floyd County school lands an average or above average ranking when it comes to having good environment for learning.

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Tim Hensley



Lou Byars



Jenni  
Cunningham



Parke  
Wilkinson

Every school in Rome and Floyd County now ranks either at average or above average as far as providing a safe, positive environment for students, according to the school climate ratings recently released by the Georgia Department of Education.

Nine Floyd County schools and three Rome City schools received perfect five-star ratings.

"Climate" refers to the quality or character of school life. The ratings are calculated using surveys from students, teachers and parents, student discipline records, reports of incidents such as bullying or use of illegal substances and attendance records for teachers, staff and students.

Five stars is the highest score, ranked as excellent; four stars rank above average; three stars means average; two stars means below satisfactory; and one star is considered unsatisfactory.

Coosa High was the only school in Floyd County to receive less than four stars, ranking at three stars. Sixteen Floyd County schools maintained their rankings from 2015 and two lost one point, but kept above average rankings.

"This is an indication of the efforts of the schools with students, teachers and parents all coming together to create an environment conducive to quality learning," said Tim Hensley, assistant to the superintendent of Floyd County Schools. "Half of our schools have a five-star rating."

Hensley said the system credits the way officials have been working to find out the mindset of the students and staff at every school.

"I was at several schools the other day, talking to students about the school climate," he said. "We take these discussions and keep an eye on the information we gather from these groups and use that to make improvements."

Jenni Cunningham, principal at McHenry Primary, was pleased to see her school keep its five-star ranking for the second year in a row.

"We are thrilled," she said. "All across the school, my staff reaches out to our parents and we try to create a bridge between school and home. Parents know their children are safe here and that we love them."

Teachers also are happy to be at work, Cunningham added.

"We're all part of the 'McFamily' as I call it," she said. "My staff does make a difference. That five is not what we dwell on, but it is nice to see it, to know we are doing a good job."

Anna K. Davie and Main elementary schools both ranked three stars as well, but showed increases in their scores from last year. Anna K. Davie moved up two points from one star to three stars and Main moved up from two stars to three. Six Rome City schools improved their rankings and the other three maintained their rankings from the previous year.

Seeing so many schools improve their rankings pleased system officials, according to Lou Byars, interim superintendent of Rome City Schools.

"We have tried to focus on the issues that the climate rankings look at," Byars said. "We've been working with positive reinforcement, rather than negative, which has made a difference. We've also worked on getting our parents more involved."

At Anna K. Davie Elementary — the school with the biggest improvement in ratings — Principal Parke Wilkinson is happy to see a jump, but not satisfied, he said.

"To move from one star to three stars is proof that we are getting better each day," he said. "There's been a perceptible culture change. Our parent responses were very strong and positive. We've been working on improving attendance. We are very proud about where we are and we are proud of where we are going. I think we'll be at five stars next year."

### **Financial efficiency ratings**

The state DOE also released the financial efficiency ratings for school systems.

The Financial Efficiency Star Rankings — based on a five-star scale, with one being the lowest and five the highest — measures a school system's spending per pupil in relation to academic achievements.

A five-star district would be described as having high academic achievement and lower levels of expenditures, while a one-star district would have low achievement and high spending.

Floyd received a 2.5 rating, with a spending average of \$9,024.04 per pupil and an average College & Career Ready Performance Index score of 71.2.

Rome received a 3.5 rating, with a spending average of \$8,125.35 per pupil and an average CCRPI score of 72.2.

System officials agree that part of the reason for the rankings is the fact that Rome and Floyd County operate more, smaller schools than many systems.

"In another county our size, you may see just one or two high schools," explained Hensley. "Here we have four. That is because our community agrees they want more, smaller schools. That costs more to do that."

Byars said that Rome City officials are working to improve CCRPI scores to offset the higher cost per pupil.

"We are happy with our ranking, but we want to continue to improve," he said.

**FLOYD COUNTY/  
ROME SCHOOL  
CLIMATE RATINGS**

School	2016	2015
Johnson Elementary	5	5
Coosa Middle	4	4
Pepperell High	4	4
Model High	4	4
McHenry Primary	5	5
Model Elementary	4	5
Armuchee Elementary	4	4
Model Middle	5	5
Pepperell Elementary	4	4
Pepperell Middle	5	5
Armuchee Middle	5	5
Armuchee High	4	4
Alto Park Elementary	5	5
Garden Lakes Elem.	4	5
Cave Spring Elem.	5	5
Glenwood Primary	5	5
Pepperell Primary	5	5
Coosa High	3	3
Elm Street Elementary	4	4
West Central Elem.	5	4
East Central Elem.	5	4
Anna K. Davie Elem.	3	1
West End Elementary	5	4
Main Elementary	3	2
North Heights Elem.	4	2
Rome Middle	4	4
Rome High	4	4

*Source: Georgia Department of Education*