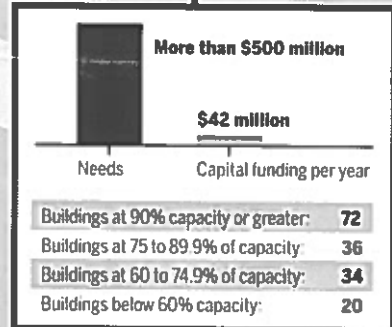
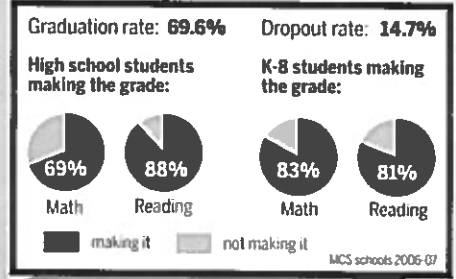
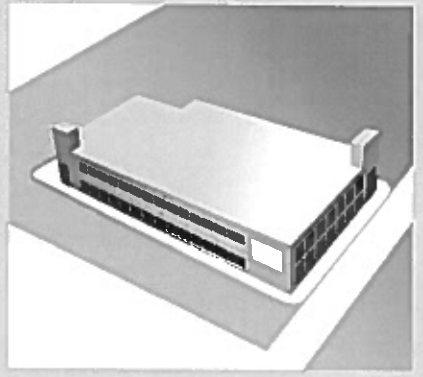


10 challenges facing Memphis City Schools

As he prepares to take the helm of Tennessee's largest school district this week, incoming superintendent Dr. Kriner Cash faces a daunting list of problems.

1 Academics
 A record 128 of the district's schools are in good standing under No Child Left Behind guidelines, having met the standard outright or by using methods allowed by the state Department of Education. But 15 schools are operating under strict directives from the state and could be closed or put under full state management if they don't improve. Yet MCS will have to work harder to boost student performance, as the twin challenges of tougher new state standards and tests, coupled with a rising NCLB bar, will likely mean a drop in schools making the grade.

2 Facilities
 The 162 buildings in which MCS holds classes vary in condition. While Manassas High students enjoy a spacious new building, students at Ross Elementary deal with severe crowding and aging portable classrooms that expose them to the elements. Other students attend classes in buildings that date back to 1903. Less than half of MCS schools are compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act Standards, which resulted in the district being cited by the Department of Justice's Offices for Civil Rights. The district plans to spend \$5.4 million next year making ADA-related renovations. Less than 75 percent of schools are completed on time and within budget.



School officials have documented more than \$500 million in facilities needs for the district in a recent five-year plan. The district gets about \$42 million each year to tackle those maintenance issues and for new construction projects.

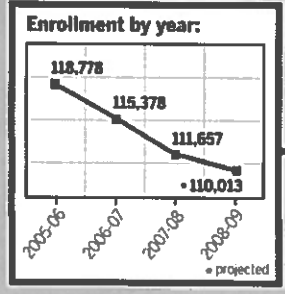
4 Corruption
 Poor business practices have landed Memphis City Schools in the headlines several times in the past year as local, state and federal officials investigate:

- In October, internal auditors found more than 240 tons of improperly stored frozen food at the district's Central Nutrition Center. A complete audit later found more than \$4 million in wasteful spending, much of which broke state and federal bidding laws.
- A \$517,000 digital copier lease was made using the signature of a dead lawyer.
- About \$9,000 went unaccounted for from the coffers of Frayser High School, resulting in the firing of the financial secretary.
- Federal and state authorities are also examining construction bidding, facilities consulting, nutrition services and transportation contracts.

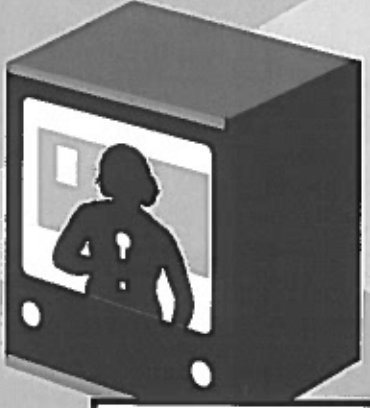
3 Teacher quality
 No Child Left Behind requires that 100 percent of teaching staff in core subjects must be considered "highly qualified." MCS is still nine percentage points away from that goal, and hopes to move up two percentage points next year. It also plans to move the number of teachers using special permits or alternative licensing standards from 750 to 350 by 2010. The school district is working on a five-year, \$18 million partnership with New York-based New Leaders for New Schools. The Effective Practice Incentive Community is a national pilot program that will examine how teaching and school management help students perform better.



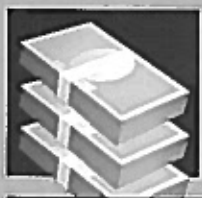
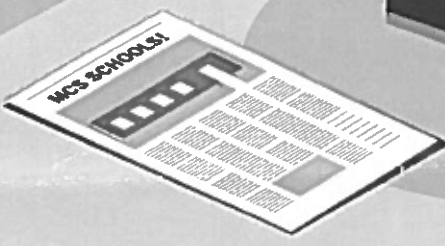
5 Violence
 Three shootings inside Memphis classrooms, two of them just eight days apart, have renewed concern about safety and led to the mayor deploying more than five dozen police officers into the city's middle and high schools to augment officers and metal detectors already in place. 15 schoolground shootings have taken place in Memphis since 2003. Five resulted in injuries, including three this year. 30 students were arrested for guns in the 2006-07 school year in Memphis City Schools. 281 weapons-related offenses were reported to the Tennessee Department of Education in 2006-07, up from 180 in 2005-06. The district hopes to boost its alternative programs capacity from 700 to 1,000 students by June 2011.



7 Declining enrollment
 The district's enrollment has been dropping significantly for years. That means less funding for the district. City schools officials had to cut \$3.1 million from their 2007-08 budget because enrollment dropped by 3,100 more students than they projected. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that enrollment drops are spread out across the city and make it more difficult to place more teachers in schools with fast-growing populations.

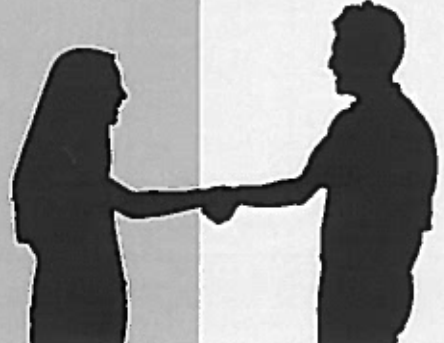
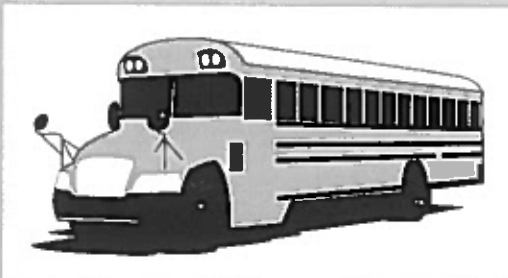


6 Public perception
 "Every Child. Every Day. College Bound." The mantra is now owned by many of the city's youngest children but is finding a harder time entering the hearts of adults. Public relations gaffes like the dirty dancing at Mitchell High that made international headlines have embarrassed the district.



8 Funding
 Who is responsible for funding Memphis City Schools? That unresolved question has taken on further urgency as a battle has brewed between the school district and the City Council on the issue. The council cut \$66.2 million of the \$93.5 million the district requested, which has resulted in a lawsuit filed by the school district and a threat from state officials to withhold more than \$400 million if the issue can't be resolved. And the Shelby County Commission recently flirted with the idea of backing out of the \$60 million in capital funding for both school districts.

9 Politics
 Navigating the complex relationships with Shelby County Schools and city and county governments have proven to be a real challenge for Memphis City Schools. Annexations have created tense relationships between the district and Shelby County Schools and at times put them on opposing sides of deals.



10 Poverty and student mobility
 The relative poverty of MCS students also provides a challenge to educating them. Approximately 85.1 percent of students are considered economically disadvantaged. In the 2006-07 school year, 29 percent of students changed schools at least once during the school year. School officials have implemented a districtwide curriculum in hopes of keeping students from falling behind.