Jespersen said his school began to see grades impr
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The first report cards of the school year are arriving with many more Fs than usual in a dismal sign of the struggles students are experiencing with distance learning.

School districts from coast to coast have reported the number of students failing classes has risen by as many as two or three times with English language learners and disabled and disadvantaged students suffering the most.

It was completely off the rails from what is normal for us, and that was obviously very alarming, said Erik Jespersen, principal of Oregon's McNary High School, where 38% of grades in late October were failing, compared with 8% in normal times.

Educators see a number of factors at play: Students learning from home skip assignments or school altogether. Internet access is limited or inconsistent, making it difficult to complete and upload assignments. And teachers who don't see their students in person have fewer ways to pick up on who is falling behind, especially with many keeping their cameras off during Zoom sessions.

The increase in failing grades has been seen in districts of all sizes around the country.

At Jespersen's school in the Salem-Keizer Public School district, hundreds of students initially had not just Fs, but grade scores of 0. 0%, indicating they simply were not participating in school at all. In New Mexico, more than 40 percent of middle and high school students were failing at least one class as of late October. In Houston, 42% of students received at least one F in the first grading period of the year. Nearly 40% of grades for high school students in St. Paul, Minnesota, were Fs, double the amount in a typical year.

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