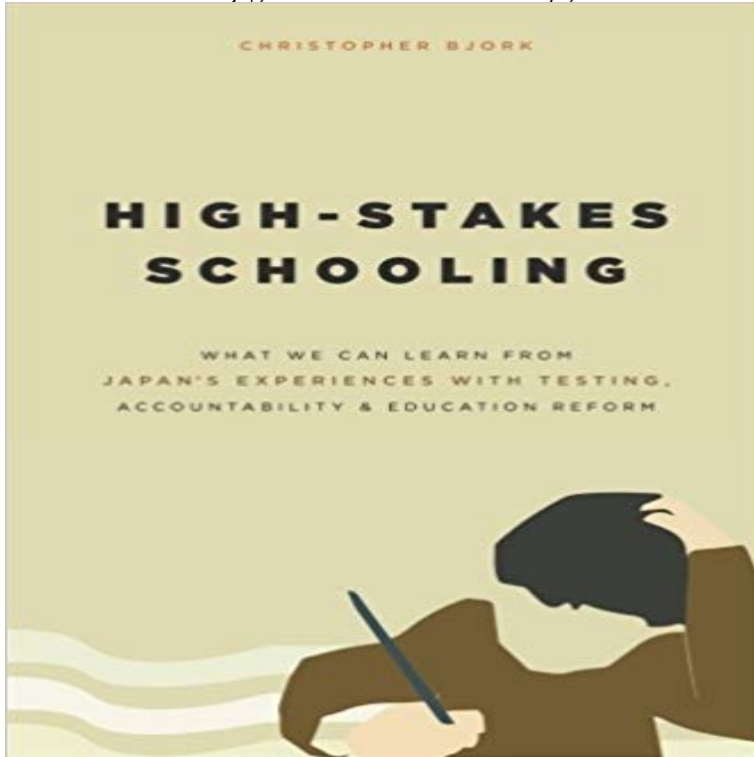


# High-Stakes Schooling: What We Can Learn from Japans Experiences with Testing, Accountability, and Education Reform



If there is one thing that describes the trajectory of American education, it is this: more high-stakes testing. In the United States, the debates surrounding this trajectory can be so fierce that it feels like we are in uncharted waters. As Christopher Bjork reminds us in this study, however, we are not the first to make testing so central to education: Japan has been doing it for decades. Drawing on Japans experiences with testing, overtesting, and recent reforms to relax educational pressures, he sheds light on the best path forward for US schools. Bjork asks a variety of important questions related to testing and reform: Does testing overburden students? Does it impede innovation and encourage conformity? Can a system anchored by examination be reshaped to nurture creativity and curiosity? How should any reforms be implemented by teachers? Each chapter explores questions like these with careful attention to the actual effects policies have had on schools in Japan and other Asian settings, and each draws direct parallels to issues that US schools currently face. Offering a wake-up call for American education, Bjork ultimately cautions that the accountability-driven practice of standardized testing might very well exacerbate the precise problems it is trying to solve.

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