

Appendix B: Research Methodology

We used a variety of methods to gather information about Summit Public Schools, the Summit Learning Program, the Summit Learning Platform, and personalized learning more generally.

Internet Searches and Online Resources

We gathered information throughout the year, conducting weekly Google searches using the following terms (with and without quotation marks): “marketing in schools,” “advertising in schools,” “commercialism in schools,” “student privacy,” “student data privacy,” “blended learning,” “personalized learning,” “digital learning,” “adaptive learning,” “Facebook in schools,” “Amazon in schools,” “Google in schools,” “Jeff Bezos in schools,” “Bill Gates in schools,” and “Mark Zuckerberg in schools.” These search terms allowed us to identify new developments related to personalized learning and major developments in philanthropic support for the use of technology in schools. They also informed us about developments relating to commercialism and marketing in schools more generally, especially those related to digital marketing to children. We explored any relevant entries that appeared in these searches and followed up on them as appropriate to develop further lines of investigation.

In addition, we monitored the websites of several key organizations in order to identify commercialism-related issues for follow-up Internet and/or academic research. The following websites associated with advertising and marketing, health care and nutrition, government policy, education, and academic research offer information on industry perspectives, advocacy perspectives, updates about government perspectives and regulatory activity, and information about new activities related to commercialism in schools.

Websites Monitored		
Sources	Website	Relevance
American Advertising Federation	http://www.aaf.org/	Advertising industry organization
American Association of Advertising Agencies	http://www.aaaa.org/	Advertising industry organization
American Beverage Association	http://www.ameribev.org/	Food industry organization
Association of National Advertisers	https://www.ana.net/	Advertising industry organization
British Psychological Society	https://digest.bps.org.uk/	Occasionally reports on research about psychological implications of marketing to children
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood	http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/	Anti-commercialism child advocacy organization

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives	https://www.policyalternatives.ca/	Canadian research institute concerned with issues of social, economic and environmental justice
Center for Digital Democracy	https://www.democraticmedia.org/	Consumer advocacy organization that focuses on digital technology
Center for Science in the Public Interest	https://cspinet.org/	Consumer advocacy organization that focuses on food marketing (including to children and in schools)
Class Size Matters	http://www.classsizematters.org/	Education advocacy organization that focuses on children and parents, including privacy protection
Code Acts in Education	https://codeactsineducation.wordpress.com/	Website that contains writing by Ben Williamson on technology in education
Consumers International	http://www.consumersinternational.org/	Consumer advocacy organization
Commercial Alert	http://commercialalert.org/	Consumer advocacy organization
Corporate Accountability International	https://www.stopcorporateabuse.org/	Public advocacy organization
Data & Society	https://datasociety.net	Research institute that focuses on social and cultural issues arising from data-centric technological development
Education Week	http://www.edweek.org/ew/index.html	U.S. newspaper that covers K-12 education
Electronic Frontier Foundation	https://www.eff.org/	Non-profit organization that focuses on digital rights, including privacy
Electronic Privacy Information Center	https://www.epic.org/	Non-profit research center that focuses on privacy, freedom of expression, and democratic values in a digital context
Federal Communications Commission	http://www.fcc.gov/	United States government agency that regulates interstate communications
Federal Trade Commission	https://www.ftc.gov/	United States government agency charged with protecting consumers
Hack Education	http://hackeducation.com/	Website that contains writing by Audrey Watters about technology in education
Healthy Food America	http://www.healthyfoodamerica.org	U.S. nonprofit organization that focuses on food policy and industry practice, including marketing
Idle Words Blog (Maciej Cegłowski)	http://idlewords.com/talks/	Website that contains writing by Maciej Cegłowski about digital technology
Kidscreen	http://kidscreen.com/	Trade publication for children's entertainment professionals, including marketers
MedPage Today	http://www.medpagetoday.com/	Website for health care professionals that occasionally reports on relevant child-health research

National Academy of Medicine	https://nam.edu/	U.S. organization of eminent professionals in medicine and related disciplines that provides resources on child health
Parent Coalition for Student Privacy	http://www.studentprivacy-matters.org/	A project of Class Size Matters that focuses on children's privacy
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity	http://www.uconnruddcenter.org/	Non-profit research and public policy organization that focuses on food policy and children's health
The Lunch Tray	http://www.thelunchtray.com/	Website that contains writing by Bettina Elias Siegel about children and food policy
Summit Public Schools	https://summitps.org/	Website contains information about the Summit Public Schools charter network
Summit Learning	https://www.summitlearning.org/	Website contains information about the Summit Learning platform

Where available, we examined the social media accounts of these organizations. We also reviewed email news alerts from the following organizations: Berkeley Media Studies Group, British Psychological Society, Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Data and Society, *Education Week*, Federal Communications Commission, Kidscreen, MedPage Today, Parent Coalition for Student Privacy, and the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity.

Summit Website and Documents

We began searches for information specifically about Summit Public Schools and the Summit Learning platform by exploring both the Summit Public Schools website and the Summit Learning website. Each website provides several types of information. The Summit Public School website provides information about board members and board meetings, each Summit Public School, facts about enrollment, and the Summit Public School model of curriculum and instruction. The Summit Learning website provides information on its approach, experiences using the Summit Learning platform, details on how to join the Summit Learning program, and news and blog reports on Summit Learning. We downloaded and examined documents from each of these websites, including *The Science of Summit*, *The Aligned School Model Framework*, *Clearing the Path*, and end-of-year summary reports for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. In addition, to account for the changing nature of online sources, we took screenshots of pages on each website.

We found additional information and documents by conducting Google searches using the following terms (with and without quotation marks): “Summit Public Schools,” “Summit Learning,” “Summit Public Schools and personalized learning,” and “Summit Learning and personalized learning.” In addition, we set a Google alert to track any news that included the terms “Summit Public Schools” or “Summit Learning.” These searches and alerts found additional information that was not published directly by either Summit Public Schools or Summit Learning, such as information about Summit Public Schools’ partnership with the Lindsay Unified School District and Transcend Education,¹ and Summit Public Schools’

“Summit Basecamp” program.²

Funding Sources

Neither Summit Public Schools nor Summit Learning maintains a public database of philanthropic support. Summit Public Schools does, however, report “Summit Schools Donors” and “Summit Learning Program Donors” in its 2017-2018 “Year-End Summary” report.³ We used this list used to conduct exploratory searches of the date, amount, purpose, and providers of philanthropic support for the years 2003-2019. From these searches we were able to compile information from public sources such as media outlets, press releases, and grant-making organizations’ grant databases. However, because the information is not reported directly by Summit Public Schools or Summit Learning, we are unable to determine whether this information is complete. As of May 19, 2020, Summit Public Schools has not provided requested records regarding its funding sources (see Appendix C).

State Performance Data

The Summit Public Schools charter school network currently runs eight charter schools in California and three in Washington. We searched California and Washington state sources for graduation rates, college and career readiness rates, and college graduation rates.⁴

Contracts

Summit Learning has a “Privacy Center” on its website (<https://www.summitlearning.org/privacy-center>) that contains current model documents, including a Program Agreement, Data Privacy Addendum, Partner Schools Terms of Service, User Agreement, Privacy Policy, and Security White Paper. Because the terms of any particular partner school’s contract were negotiated independently with Summit Public Schools and as of the 2018-2019 school year with T.L.P. Education (doing business as “Summit Learning”), we obtained executed contracts that had been received by parents from their schools. When we refer to partner school contracts, we specify the specific, executed, contract in question.

Public Records Act Request

After collecting the information we could find in public sources, we asked to interview a Summit Public Schools representative, to direct us to possible other public sources or, if the information was unavailable publicly, to provide it directly. After a brief email correspondence, Summit Public Schools denied our request (see Appendix C for the full correspondence).

As a charter school, Summit Public Schools is subject to California’s Public Record Act (PRA).⁵ Accordingly, in October 2019, we requested records that would provide information about the Summit Learning Program related to the:

- curriculum, instruction, and assessment embedded in the Summit Learning Platform, including the identity of and nature of contracts with embedded and third-party content providers;
- content and extent of the training provided to teachers and administrators of partner schools to enable them to implement the pedagogical approach as designed;
- actual costs to partner schools of implementing the Summit Learning Program;
- claims about the academic success of Summit Public Schools students used to promote the Summit Learning Program to potential partner schools;
- policies and procedures regarding the protection, sharing, use, and deletion of student data collected by the Summit Learning Platform;
- performance and retention of partner schools;
- amounts and sources of funding;
- licensing of intellectual property to and support for T.L.P. Education.

Although Summit Public Schools agreed to provide some of the relevant records, it asked for clarification on many and refused to provide several (See Appendix C). As of June 10, 2020, it has not provided any requested records.

Notes and References Appendix B

- 1 Transcend Education (n.d.). Partnering for personalized learning [webpage]. Retrieved on January 19, 2020, from <https://www.transcendeducation.org/summitlindsay#summitlindsay-introduction>
- 2 FSG Consulting (2017, March). *Building Summit Basecamp: Year 1*. Retrieved January 19, 2020, from <https://www.fsg.org/publications/building-summit-basecamp-year-1>

Madda, M.J. (2016, April 26). Spreading personalized learning: Results from Summit Public Schools' first basecamp run. *Edsurge*. Retrieved January 19, 2020, from <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2016-04-26-spreading-personalized-learning-results-from-summit-public-schools-first-basecamp-run>

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Brown, E. and Frankel, T.C. (2016, October 11). Facebook-backed school software shows promise – and raises privacy concerns. *Washington Post*. Retrieved January 19, 2020, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/facebook-backed-school-software-shows-promise--and-raises-privacy-concerns/2016/10/11/2580f9fe-80c6-11e6-b002-307601806392_story.html

Summit Public Schools (2016, June 15). *Summit Basecamp participation agreement*. Retrieved January 19, 2020, from https://drive.google.com/file/d/oB4_mvdmEmtsTYXF4M3RUB1hLalE/view
- 3 Summit Public Schools (2018). *Changing education. Changing lives* (pp. 62-63). Retrieved November 25, 2019, from <https://cdn.summitlearning.org/assets/marketing/program/year-end-summary-2017-2018.pdf>
- 4 For the state of California, data was compiled from the California DataQuest database, the California Dashboard, and the California Department of Education's Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate and Outcome data. For the state of Washington, data was compiled from the "Washington State Report Card," Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Washington State Charter School Commission. College graduation rates were unavailable. In addition, data was compiled directly from the Summit Public Schools' website on the date a school opened, the grades served in its first year, the grades served in 2019-2020, and the year of its first graduating class.

California Department of Education (n.d.). Dataquest [webpage]. Retrieved December 6, 2019, from <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

California Department of Education (n.d.). Four-year cohort graduation rate and outcome data [webpage]. Retrieved December 6, 2019, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesacgr.asp>

California Department of Education (2020, April 9). 2019 Dashboard: Data files and record layouts - College/career indicator - Data file (XLSX) [webpage]. Retrieved June 9, 2020, from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/datafiles2019.asp>

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.). Washington state report card [webpage]. Retrieved December 6, 2019, from <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/106018>

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (n.d.). Data portal [webpage]. Retrieved December 6, 2019, from <https://www.k12.wa.us/data-reporting/data-portal>

Washington State Charter School Commission (n.d.). *Summit Public Schools: Atlas – 2018-2019 annual student academic performance report* (p. 21). Retrieved June 3, 2020, from https://charterschool.wa.gov/documents/Summit-Atlas-2018-19-Academic-Report.Final_.pdf

Washington State Charter School Commission (n.d.). *Summit Public Schools: Olympus – 2018-2019 annual*

student academic performance report (p. 19). Retrieved June 3, 2020, from https://charterschool.wa.gov/documents/Summit-Olympus-2018-19-Academic-Report.Final_.pdf

Washington State Charter School Commission (n.d.). *Summit Public Schools: Sierra – 2018-2019 annual student academic performance report* (p. 19). Retrieved June 3, 2020, from <https://charterschool.wa.gov/documents/Summit-Sierra-18-19-Annual-Academic-Report.pdf>

- 5 CA SB 126 (2019) added § 47604.1, which explicitly subjects charter schools the Public Records Act, to the Education Code:

Cal Ed Code § 47604.1 (2020). Retrieved February 27, 2020, from https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=EDC§ionNum=47604.1