Comprehensive Overviews

If you wish to learn more about the complex issues surrounding the digital transformation of K-12 education, the following comprehensive overviews are a good place to begin.

Personalized Learning and the Digital Privatization of Curriculum and Teaching
National Education Policy Center
Faith Boninger, Alex Molnar, and Christopher Saldana
April 30, 2019
From the introduction: "Personalized learning programs are proliferating in schools across the United States, fueled by philanthropic dollars, tech industry lobbying, marketing by third-party vendors, and a policy environment that provides little guidance and few constraints. In this research brief, the authors consider how we got to this point. Beginning with an examination of the history of personalized learning and the key assumptions made by its proponents, they review the research evidence and reflect on the roles and possible impacts of the digital technologies deployed by many programs."

Online Learning: What Every Parent Should Know
Network for Public Education
March 2018
From the introduction: "The 18-page guide is a parent-friendly review of the research on virtual schools, online courses, blended learning and behavior management apps. It also includes a discussion of the student privacy issues that arise when highly sensitive personal student data is collected by online programs and then distributed to third-party vendors without parent knowledge or consent."

Asleep at the Switch: Schoolhouse Commercialism, Student Privacy, and the Failure of Policymaking
National Education Policy Center
Faith Boninger, Alex Molnar, and Kevin Murray.
August 15, 2017
From the introduction: "Digital technologies used in schools are increasingly being harnessed to amplify corporate marketing and profit-making and extend the reach of commercializing activities into every aspect of students' school lives. In addition to the long-standing goal of providing brand exposure, marketing through education technology now routinely engages students in activities that facilitate the collection of valuable personal data and that socialize students to accept relentless monitoring and surveillance as normal. This...report on schoolhouse commercialism trends examines how technological advances, the lure of "personalization," and lax regulation foster the collection of personal data and have overwhelmed efforts to protect children's privacy."

What is Summit Learning and why should parents and students be concerned about its use?
Parent Coalition for Student Privacy
Updated October 2019
Overview: Summit Learning represents the most comprehensive, well-financed effort to introduce computer based "personalized learning" into America's public schools. Sponsored by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and the Gates Foundation, among other Silicon Valley philanthropies, Summit has faced strong parent and student opposition as it attempts to spread its model across the country.