

# Using Feed Readers to Organize Student Thinking

Feed readers, also known as content aggregators, are one of the most valuable tools for organizing student thinking and ensuring that classes have access to meaningful content connected to the topics they are researching in class. This handout will walk you through the process of using Pageflakes—one of the best feed-reading applications available—to create student resource pages for your students to explore.

## Step 1: Adding a New Resource Page

Once you have created and logged in to a Pageflakes ([www.pageflakes.com](http://www.pageflakes.com)) account, click the **Add Page** tab found at the top of the screen. A new, blank tab will be added. This is where you will collect and organize resources for your students to explore. You can rename this tab by clicking on the words *My New Page* that appear on your tab.

## Step 2: Making a Resource Page Public

In order for students to be able to access the resources that you organize in Pageflakes, you need to make your new page public. To do so, click the orange **Menu** snowflake found in the top right-hand corner of your screen. Then, select **Publish Page to the World** from the **Make Pagecast** menu found on the left-hand side of your screen.

After clicking **Save Changes**, Pageflakes will give you a public Web address that you can share with students. They will now be able to access your resource page from any computer that has an Internet connection. The Web address for your resource page can always be found in the top right-hand corner of your new resource page.

## Step 3: Adding Websites to Resource Pages

Remember that feed readers like Pageflakes are only valuable when they are used to monitor websites that have regularly updated content. Adding sites that rarely change won't help your student researchers at all!

Once you've found a regularly updated site covering the topic that your students are studying, click the orange **Menu** snowflake found in the top right-hand corner of your screen. Then, click the **Add RSS Feed** link found on the bottom left-hand side of your screen.

In the window that appears, paste the Web address for the site into the **Add Feed** box and click the **Get Feed** button. If Pageflakes can automatically get updates from the Web page that you are interested in sharing with students (some pages do not make new content available through feed readers), a box—called a *Flake*—including links to the five most recent site updates will appear on your student resource page.

## Step 4: Skimming New Content in Flakes

Once a Flake has been added to your resource page, readers can skim for interesting information by hovering over the links that appear in each Flake. A callout spotlighting the first few sentences of each article will automatically appear. Clicking on any link listed in a Flake will take students directly to that content on its original website.

## Step 5: Editing Flakes

Pageflakes users can make a few basic appearance changes to the Flakes found on their resource pages. To change the number of new items that Pageflakes retrieves from the sites you are sharing with students, select the **Edit** button found in the top right-hand corner of each Flake. Use the drop-down menu next to **No of Posts** to request that Pageflakes retrieve anywhere from five to twenty-five items from the site that it is monitoring.

To change Flake names so that they clearly express the kind of content found on the sites being monitored, select the **Edit** button found in the top right-hand corner of the Flake. Then, enter a new name in the **Flake Title** box found under the **Preferences** tab.

## Step 5: Adding Message Boards and To-Do Lists to Resource Pages

One feature that makes Pageflakes unique is that users can add a wide range of interesting tools to the pages that they create. Two tools—message boards and to-do lists—are particularly valuable for teachers creating resource collections for student researchers.

Adding a message board to your student resource page allows users to carry on conversations about the resources they are exploring. They can make suggestions about sites that are particularly worthwhile and ask questions about new content they come across. To-do lists allow teachers to share step-by-step research directions for students on resource pages, keeping all the information about a particular project in one digital home.

To add message boards or to-do lists to your student resource pages, click the orange **Menu** snowflake found in the top right-hand corner of your screen. Then, select the **Message Board** or **To-Do List** links from the **Pagecasting** menu found in the center of the page.

## Step 6: Adding Blogs to Resource Pages

Another interesting tool that Pageflakes users can add to student resource pages is a blog. While not as sophisticated as the blogs that users can create using applications like Blogger ([www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)) or Edublogs ([www.edublogs.org](http://www.edublogs.org)), including a blog on the student resource pages will give students a chance to immediately reflect by writing new content-based entries or leaving comments on the posts crafted by peers.

Pairing Web feeds with blogs and message boards can make student resource pages all-in-one homes for researching, drafting, and refining, revising, and publishing ideas. To add blogs to your student resource pages, click the orange **Menu** snowflake found in the top right-hand corner of your screen. Then, click the **Blog** link found under the **Pagecasting** menu found in the center of the page.

## Step 7: Browsing Pagecasts

One of the best ways to find sites worth including on your student resource pages is to browse the Pagecasts that have been created by other Pageflakes users. A complete library covering topics ranging from Asia to alternative energy can be found by clicking the orange **Menu** snowflake and then selecting **Pagecasts** from the menu that appears on the left-hand side of the screen. Pagecasts can be searched by topic after selecting the **Browse All Flakes** button found near the top of the screen.