



Ask the Expert: Staging

Victoria Walmsley answers your questions about investing in staging and tiering for a school environment...

Q

As part of our commitment to raising the profile of student performance across the curriculum, our school is looking to invest in both staging and audience tiering. We need a solution that's both flexible and affordable – most of the tiering options we've investigated would leave us with a

permanent feature in our hall, for example, but it's a multifunctional space and we really need to be able to clear it completely without too much fuss or effort. Would we be better off purchasing better quality staging, and continuing with stackable chairs for the audience?

A Almost all schools find that space is at a premium and therefore need areas to be used for a range of different events. Good quality staging is now a lot more flexible than the old heavy stage blocks that schools have previously used. Gone are the days when site managers struggled to layout their creaky, noisy blocks. Modern, modular staging is now strong, lightweight and extremely versatile.

It's now possible for schools easily and safely to use their modular staging for more than one use; whether it be a single or multi-level stage, or a tiered arrangement to seat spectators or for an audience. One person is able to build, re-configure and store away the staging equipment without too much effort or time.

It is possible to use the same set of equipment to create a conventional stage area or a tiered seating arrangement, or both at the same time. It is imperative you find the supplier that will listen to your needs – some will offer a free of charge site survey and demonstration to look at your space and discuss with you your individual requirements. This sort of staging is an ideal investment for your school; you want it to have longevity and provide several solutions rather than just one. If you choose a high quality staging solution, whilst it may not always be the cheapest, it will certainly give you great value for money over time – and can often be used as a means of creating additional revenue for your school, too.

Q I teach drama at an inner city secondary. To my delight, we have a new head teacher who is keen to promote



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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performance throughout the school, and who has managed to release some budget to invest in staging. However, the only space we have that is large enough to accommodate an audience of any size, is the gym. It's a typically sparse room, and I'm really struggling to see it in terms of a theatre, especially as it will always be used daily for sport – although we do have plenty of storage space. Do you have any advice that could help us develop a truly multifunctional facility?

A

Performance is often a great way of including everyone, improving confidence and encouraging cross-curricular activity and it's great you have a new head that believes in this.

With good quality modular staging it's possible to truly transform any space into a first class performance

area and forget what the room is commonly used for. If you choose the right stage provider for your space, it will be simple to build and store away, and can be configured very quickly by one person. Well-designed staging includes many value added extras and accessories to transform your space and a simple performance platform into a portable theatre fit for any type of presentation. Scenery and valances can be added, along with simple to erect proscenium structures and drapes to make it appear that your professional stage is a fixed addition. Paintable scenery flats are an excellent way of involving children who may not be interested in performance, but have other artistic talents. It's essential that you consider all the features you require, including safety, and again, good staging companies will provide you with a free, no obligation site survey to fully assess your needs and give you the opportunity to see and test their product.

It's good that you have lots of storage space, but it's worth noting that this isn't always necessary for good quality modular staging as most are able to be stored compactly. A good modular stage will enable you to create a multitude of layouts and use it for many different presentations. You don't need a dedicated hall, just a space to accommodate your audience.