

Map the resources your community already has.

The help exists. The map doesn't. You're the person who can build it.

Every community has resources meant to support students: tutoring programs, mentoring groups, food pantries, mental health services, career centers, and local employers who want to help. But they live in different buildings, websites, and conversations. Your job is to inventory what's there, organize it using Lean 5S, and hand the map to an organization that can keep it alive.

372:1

Students per school counselor nationally in 2024–25, against a recommended 250:1.

AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION, 2024–25 RATIOS

13,360+

School districts in the U.S., each sitting inside a community with resources students never hear about.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

27%

Higher odds of employment for young people who volunteer. The signal is the intentional project behind the hours.

CNCS RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

Start here: what to do before meetup two

- 1 Pick one place where students get stuck: applying to college, finding food or housing help, getting tutoring, or finding a mentor.
- 2 List five organizations or people in your community who already work on that problem.
- 3 Contact two of them and ask what they offer, who qualifies, and how students usually find them.
- 4 Bring what you learn to meetup two. That's the start of the map.

Current state

- A counselor knows some options but not all of them.
- A nonprofit has open spots but no connection to the school.
- A student gives up because finding help feels like a second job.
- Every year, someone starts the same inventory from scratch.

Future state

- Students, families, and staff all point to the same living directory.
- Resources are grouped by the problem a student is trying to solve.
- Entries are verified, dated, and easy to update.
- The project becomes a reference line on your resume and a real asset for the community.

Organize the mess with Lean 5S

Lean 5S is a visual management system. We introduce it so you can inventory and organize resources the same way a hospital organizes supplies or a shop organizes tools.

Sort

Decide what counts as a resource. If it doesn't help students stay engaged or move forward, set it aside.

Set

Group resources by the decision a student is trying to make. Match how students actually search.

Shine

Verify the details. Is it still running? Who do you contact? A map with broken numbers is worse than no map.

Standardize

Use the same format for every entry. Consistency makes the map usable by someone who didn't build it.

Sustain

Plan how the map stays current. A map is only useful if someone keeps it alive.

Who can host this project

- A school counseling office that wants families to find help faster.
- A community center or library that already keeps local resource lists.
- A nonprofit coalition or United Way chapter trying to reduce duplication.
- A city or county youth services department that needs better outreach.
- A campus community engagement office that wants a student-run project.

What you walk away with

- A living resource map your host organization can actually use.
- A process for keeping it current, with a named owner and update schedule.
- A named reference who saw you verify, organize, and hand off the work.
- A STAR story about systems thinking, design thinking, and continuous improvement.

Why this project signals what employers want

- You worked with ambiguity and made a pile of information navigable.
- You designed for someone else: a stressed student trying to find help.
- You coordinated across organizations that don't report to you.
- You built something sustainable, not just a one-time list.

The whole project starts with two conversations

Pick a category, list five resources, and call two of them before meetup two.

plan-ahead-buddy-00.lovable.app/resource-mapping

Free tools: /project-brief