Example Three: Margaret Lindop’s Approach – Group Activity Woven Into Regular Class Activities

“I did this as a group activity, finishing with individual conference sessions. Each step can be done on a separate day, weaving in basic skills and work preparation.

For a week or so before a required testing period, I would weave it into instructional activities. I used a “discuss-write-read” model with each day’s step, mind-mapping the discussion, and leading into writing. My hope was to place their required testing (ABLE at the time) in a bigger context of self-assessment and to do this kind of learner observation/analysis at the same time.

When I did this with my students, I used the conversation below to introduce each session.”

Using “Analyzing My Learning: Strengths and Struggles” in a Group Setting

Day 1: Strengths/Abilities/Interests
Periodically you take a test (e.g., TABE) to measure how much progress you’ve made. But, is that the only way to show what you’ve learned? (Wait for response.) How do you know you’ve made progress with your education? (Get responses.)

You’re adults and you know yourself pretty well. Have you ever tried to analyze your own strengths or abilities and, also, the kinds of things you struggle with? We all have both strengths and struggles, don’t we?

We’re actually going to try that in the next few days. It’s a very helpful thing to know your own strengths and struggles, whether it’s in your family, in your neighborhood, or at work. Today we’re going to look at our strong points, our abilities and our talents.

(Hand out first page, read each part, assisting with writing as needed.)

Day 2: Health/Medical/Family factors that might affect my learning
Yesterday we thought about our strengths. Today, let’s look at health or medical factors, including hearing and vision, that can affect our ability to learn. As we read each item, check it if you think it might be keeping you from making as much progress as you would like to make. (Teacher reads each item out loud, learners following along, marking. After this section is completed, you might have open discussion that could lead to writing. You could develop this into an essay writing exercise if you wish.)

Day 3: Reading, Writing and Spelling, and Math
Yesterday we thought about a lot of things that can be barriers to learning. There’s another kind of barrier that you might not think about. Even though we’re quite intelligent, we can have a kind of problem with reading, writing, spelling, math, even thinking or organizing. These may be learning disabilities. Do any of you know that term? Do you know what it means? (Get their responses first. This is an opportune time to try to dispel myths about LD. Many people think it means the same thing as mental retardation although it is completely different. To demonstrate, you might want to do the name card activity from Chapter 1. It’s helpful to talk about these as information processing problems. Discussion and writing could follow.)
Today we’re going to talk about specific problems you may run into when you read, write, spell, or do math. Check anything that has been a problem for you. We’ll take a minute at the bottom of each page where you can explain anything else.

Day 4: Other Factors That Can Affect Learning
We’ve been thinking about all the different things that can get in the way when we’re trying to learn. Today we’re going to think about some factors you may not have thought of before. They have to do with how we pay attention, organize ourselves, and relate to other people. Check anything that you have experienced.

Day 5: REVIEW
Over the last few days we’ve been thinking about things that can get in the way of our learning. Let’s stop and remember those kinds of things. What are some of those? (As learners respond, start to create a mind map similar to this on the board. Mind mapping is variously called cognitive mapping or webbing.)

Pick out three things that you think might apply to you or that you think are important and use those as your main points in your essay. Remember to give examples of each. (Adjust this to your group. Some people may write just a couple of sentences, but everyone should be encouraged to write.)

Example Four: Joe Spoon’s Story – Weaving Together Observation, Trial Teaching, and Planning
In this account, Joe talks about his work with Sandy, an adult education student. He includes observation and trial teaching to plan with her. As Joe describes his “detective” work with Sandy’s reading difficulty, we see a skillful example of the try out and observe process of trial or diagnostic teaching.

“As in my opinion, it is the goal of every adult educator to provide their adult learners with the keys to enable those learners to open all the doors necessary for completion of their chosen goals. There is one particular skill that can serve to open many doors. That skill is reading. Reading can put any learner at the doorstep of numerous opportunities. Many students come to our adult education classes with all their reading skills intact. After a short period of review, these students are ready to move on. There are those students, however, who continually struggle with their reading abili-