

Reflections upon *The New Iowa Spelling Scale*,
the ***only*** comprehensive study on children’s spelling in grades 2 through 8.

If it is true as the experts¹ tell us that phonics need only be taught in the first two grades, then third graders should have no trouble with the double consonant plus the le ending families (CVDC+le) as in riddle, struggle, kettle, etc. Yet, only 9% could correctly spell *riddle*. Only 4% could spell *kettle* and only 2% could spell *struggle*. Obviously, something is wrong. And if it is true that students don’t spell as well today as the students did when the New Iowa Spelling Scale² was published, something is seriously wrong with our spelling curriculum or how spelling is—**or is not**—taught. Mostly, is not. As nearly every spelling program is based upon the same word frequency studies as the *New Iowa Spelling Scale* we can estimate quite accurately the number of CVCC+le words that occur in traditional spelling texts from grades 2 through 8. Of the 406 possible, only 15 regularly occur. Of the 100 CVDC+ing words such *struggling*, the odds say that not one will be found in today’s spelling texts. Perhaps some graduate students at SVSU would like to do a study on this.

The numbers after the words below represent the percentage of 3rd graders who
can correctly spell the word.

CVC	CVCC	CV, CVV, CVCe	CVVC	W- & -R Controlled	ER/LE
grab..... 17	ask60	boy..... 91	bean.....29	march..... 31	matter23
grabbed03	asked33	boys 86	beans18	marched 12	matters12
bob44	bell71	boy’s 34	beat.....33	mark..... 33	table34
bobbed03	bells55	boys’ 18	beating.....16	marked..... 17	tables30
dig53	box75	give..... 61	boat61	bark..... 39	circle03
digging..... 10	boxes16	gives 33	boats.....41	barks 23	circles.....01
run.....74	bush25	giving..... 29	dream27	want 61	trouble.....07
running..... 12	bushes.....19	have 79	dreamed.....13	wants 33	troubles06
win.....46	calf22	haven’t..... 20	wood53	was 76	handle..... 12
winning09	calves05	having 40	woods59	wasn’t 10	handles09
get58	camp.....38	love 78	wooden.....28	warm..... 41	candle..... 14
getting 17	camping.....20	lovely 24	wealth.....02	warmer..... 22	candles06
let68	cash23	low 45	wealthy.....01	hard..... 50	offer21
letting..... 13	cached.....13	lowest 11	health.....08	harder..... 27	offers.....08
sit46	cold.....72	mail.....32	healthy.....05	hardest 12	suffer..... 11
sitting 12	colder42	mailed 17	head.....38	hardly..... 25	suffered03
cut57	dish.....34	make 69	heads22	form 36	manner19
cutting 19	dishes13	making..... 36	heel.....15	forms 16	manners..... 14
dress.....40	fact19	chase 13	heels08	fear 38	letter.....37
dresses 23	facts08	chased..... 07	might.....31	fearful 09	letters 13
had76	end.....54	do..... 88	mighty 12	worth 08	member 12
hadn’t..... 06	ended.....33	does..... 26	mean.....31	worthy 02	members.... 12
skin28	soft35	doesn’t..... 09	means 18	large..... 21	enter 19
skinned.....03	softly14	drive.....42	meaning.....13	largely..... 05	entered07
bid32	luck.....32	driving 22	meant.....03	dirt 17	entering07
bids 16	lucky.....10	driver 26	need.....46	dirty 13	cover35
can69	blank.....28	view 02	needs29	fire 52	covers..... 18
canned.....01	blanks13	views..... 02	needed 18	fires..... 36	covered..... 10

¹Anderson, Richard C., Elfrieda H. Heibert, et. al. *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Washington, D.C., The National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education.

²Greene, Harry. *The New Iowa Spelling Scale*. Iowa City: The University of Iowa, 1954.

-y		-que, ch,, ci, ti, ss	Prefix Suffix	Insane Basic
body 33	specific01	anxious 03	amuse05	against 06
bodies..... 04	public04	nature 03	absence.....04	answer 03
study 19	picnic.....14	issues 03	accept01	answering . 02
studies..... 05	topic06	garage 04	affected01	breakfast ... 06
studying 11	dramatic ...02	confidential02	afford.....03	building 19
penny 35	democratic.02	session 01	analysis02	country..... 14
pennies..... 10	enthusiastic01	mansion 01	confidence.01	countries ... 05
happy 62	medical.....02	pressure..... 03	appoint03	island 10
happiest.... 02	special05	discussion	apply03	laugh..... 09
carry34	criminal04	treasure 02	policy02	laughter..... 08
carries 05	officials01	pleasure..... 05	approve 02	thorough ... 01
carrying.....21	legal.....04	religious 03	arrange04	through 02
pretty 28	trial06	religion 02	arrest02	woman 16
prettiest 02	location.....06	feature..... 03	assist.....03	ache 06
baby 74	signal.....06	creature 01	assistance ..01	acres..... 01
babies 11	occasional..02	statue..... 02	audience ...01	aisles 01
lady 31	several02	phone 10	belief02	choir..... 02
ladies..... 06	central.....02	telephone .. 02	benefit03	Christian ... 03
fancy 18	natural03	paragraph.. 01	century01	cough 04
satisfied.... 06	naturally03	geography . 02	circuit01	doubt..... 02
necessary... 01	nation02	phrase 01	collection...06	ghost 04
necessity ... 01	passion01	triumph 02	comparison03	honestly 02
fairly 20	confidential02	nephew 01	conclusion .01	salmon 03
fairies 08	mutual01	million 02	contribute ..01	stomach 02
story 40	usual01	opinion..... 03	descend02	tongue..... 01
stories..... 13	motion01	persuade.... 02	deceive04	Wednesday09
deliver 15	wisdom.....08	mission 03	probable02	calm 03
deliveries... 01	custom.....05	bureau 01	difficulties .03	listening 04

Although the following words are in The New Iowa Spelling Scale they were not given to any of the 2nd or 3rd graders who participated in the study: partial, initial, official, unusual gracious delicious precious profession decision bouquet acceptable ancient applying assistant beneficial difficult