I believe that keeping discipline in the classroom is the most important skill a teacher must master. In order to keep a disciplined classroom, I believe it is important to create a set of rules in which all students agree to sign and follow during the school year. Also, I believe a copy of these signed rules should be mailed to parents so they know that their child has agreed to abide by these rules. In order to keep these rules effective, a teacher must remain consistent in enforcing them; this will help keep the respect of the students. However, flexibility should also be used in your classroom rules as well. Sometimes rules that aren’t working will need to be changed, and other times a student might be in a special circumstance where a certain rule may need to be temporarily waived. Steadfast yet flexible classroom rules set up an environment of great discipline. Effective discipline helps to improve all aspects of learning. When students are well disciplined, you are more likely to get through your standards, students are likely to take home more knowledge, and your classroom will be safer and more fun for both the students and the teacher.

Perhaps the greatest aspect of keeping a well disciplined classroom is organization of lesson plans and daily procedures. Having efficient lesson plans that keep the classroom moving without “lulls in the action” keep students busy where they are less likely to cause trouble. This view is shared by theorist Fred Jones who says “50% of class time is lost due to student misbehavior and being off task.” This shows if you keep the classroom moving without slowing down, students will misbehave less and
less class time will be lost. Also, there should be daily procedures that do no change no matter what your lesson plan is for the day. For example, the students will start each day by turning in any homework assignments given the previous class. Next, I plan to have at least one critical question written on the board at the beginning of each class for the students to discuss and write a two to three sentence response on. During this time I will be able to take role and prepare any worksheets, Power Point program, or projection slides needed for the lesson. This should be the start of a class period that never slows down. After getting one or two students to talk about the question on the board we will immediately go into the day’s lesson. At the end of the class I will let the students know of any possible homework assignments as well as letting them know what to expect from the next class period. It is also important to keep vibrant mobile lesson plans that keep students active and interested. Although this can not be done every class period, I believe that by keeping the “strictly lecture” lessons to a minimum will make it so students do not get tired of the monotony of daily note taking and they will stay on task for the days that we do just take notes. By varying your lesson plans and keeping daily class procedures students will have no down time and will be more productive and less likely to cause trouble.

In order to keep classroom misbehavior to a minimum, a teacher must set up appropriate classroom rules as well as consequences for breaking these rules. Because I plan on teaching at the high school age level, I believe that students are capable of helping to create classroom rules. William Glassar was the originator of this view. He believes that students need to be able to have a say in their learning. If you want students to behave you must treat them like adults, and one very important way to do that is to let
them have a say in classroom rules. Taking this approach will help students become “more self-directing, responsible, and concerned about the well-being of others (Charles 223).” However, I am not a teacher who will let them make all of the rules. I plan to give them a list of rules that I believe the class should have and let them argue for or against each rule on the list. We will spend as much as the first class period as possible debating possible rules changes. They have the ability to add or take away rules on the sheet if they are able to show an appropriate argument as to why. This promotes critical thinking and allows the students to feel a sense of control over the classroom. This will create an atmosphere of democracy instead of a dictatorship. Keeping a democracy in the classroom comes from Lee and Marlene Canter’s Assertive Discipline. They believe that you need to remain in control but it must be control with respect instead of being authoritarian. Once the rules have been selected, I will follow whatever the school handbook of the school I am teaching at says to deal with the problem. Because the students have so much say in classroom rules, I will follow the handbook very strictly. However, there are some circumstances where I will be flexible, such as if a student is in a special situation, or an unexpected issue comes up that is not outlined in the classroom rules. I believe it is important to enforce the rules strictly but at the same time, I believe that there are many circumstances where flexibility is necessary. Flexibility is also necessary if the rules chosen are not working as planned. If this is the case I reserve the right to take complete control of classroom rules away from the students. I believe that an appropriate mixture of strictness and flexibility is necessary in any classroom if you want to remain in control. (An example of a possible classroom set of policies can be found on the last page along with the letter to the parent. The ones marked with **** are
the ones that the students added other than what was on the list that I gave them. Of course this is just an example and may not happen in real life.)

How to punish disciplinary problems can be a hard matter to deal with. I plan on following the handbook the school gives, which usually involves negative consequences. Some say this is the wrong way to deal with discipline problems but I do not. I feel that because I have the students a chance to set up their own classroom rules, added with the fact that I will use plenty of positive reinforcement for good behavior, that negative consequences for broken rules are appropriate. These would include detentions, Saturday schools, calls home, and being sent to the office to be reprimanded. I believe that if you give students positive reinforcement for good behavior and allow them to set up their own classroom rules that negative consequences are necessary when classroom rules are broken.

As you can see, discipline is an extremely important element of teaching. There should be just as much effort put into discipline as any other aspect of teaching. By reducing the amount of disciplinary problems in your classroom you create extra time for learning. Students want discipline and teachers want a well disciplined classroom. This means it is beneficial to all parties to spend time creating an affective discipline plan.