Faculty Teamwork Case Study

Introduction:
A successful team of teachers that have been working together for years has established a tradition among its students: Frontier Day. On this day, this 8th grade team, which is the gifted team, takes the students and teaches them about the American Frontier in a hands-on approach. It has been successful in all the years it has run and is a sort of rite of passage for the 8th team that gets to participate. This year, one of the team teachers has retired and is being replaced by Ms. Prior, a teacher from another 8th grade team. When planning for Frontier Day begins, Ms. Prior is adamantly opposed to the notion of taking the students out of the traditional instructional setting and “goofing off” all day. When the other teachers on the team try to explain the historical significance and the maturity that the gifted students have, Ms. Prior stonewalls their comments and now refuses to work with them on this or anything else. Ms. Goode, the principal, has been asked to mediate a meeting between the disgruntled parties.

Analyze the case:
Ms. Goode could have prevented the problem of an ineffectual team by discussing the norms of the teams with Ms. Prior before she entered the team. This is obviously a successful team that is just a lot more creative and perhaps non-traditional in regards to methodology. Because of this, Ms. Goode could have kept Ms. Prior in her other assignment while finding a more suitable candidate that shared like views on instructional practices, beliefs, and attitude.

Ms. Goode can defuse the emotions of the team by opening the meeting with a statement about how each member is to use I statements and state only facts. By doing this, the team will not be as easily able to attack one another and have a dialogue.

Unfortunately, in a situation like this, the only recourse of action maybe for the principal to make the decision on issues of conflict. Though it goes against the team philosophy, it could very well be the only way that the team could function. She could also revamp the teams so that a compromise could be made.

Discuss the larger issues:
Team teaching at any level could work. The importance of this is making sure that there is a unified philosophy among team teachers. If teachers are able to teach with like-ideological-holding people, then it can be successful at any level. It is when teacher are forced to teach in a team approach that problems begin to arise.

It is difficult to state whether or not Frontier day should be in a structured classroom environment or whether it should be an activity day. For the sake of student excitement and enthusiasm about learning, it would definitely be
more enhanced under the project. But there are many structured classroom activities that could fulfill the same academic requirement, but they may not be as engaging as the project. One would have to do a side-by-side comparison and physically evaluate the effectiveness before a concrete decision is rendered.

Teacher personality and instructional style would have major effect on my decisions as an administrator IF the school was built around the team teaching philosophy. Because it is important to have cohesiveness among team teachers, these factors would be taken into consideration. However, if a school or department is not based in the team teaching philosophy, the variety of personalities and instructional style may be highly beneficial to the growth of a school and/or department.

Be a problem solver:
The first thing I would do as the administrator in this particular situation is meet with the teacher individually for a more candid and honest response about what is going on and ask them what compromises they were willing to concede to in this situation. I would then take all of that into consideration before entering the meeting. The role I would play during the meeting would be mediator. I would be sure that the facts are stated, each member to states their concessions and see if a compromise could not be reached. If the teachers were unable to make a compromise, I would make the final decision and look at possibly revamping the makeup of that particular team.