**Stepping Stone: Nutrition
WHAT EXACTLY IS “GROW FOOD”?**

Good nutrition is essential to the successful education, growth and development of the whole child.  We feed the children a variety of healthy snacks and discuss and do works related to healthy foods throughout the day.  We also compost our food waste and emphasis the connection with our garden, and where food comes from.  We encourage our families to expand on and continue these discussions and practices at home whenever possible.

Lunch time at the Kiva is a many layered “lesson” in manners, etiquette, cleanliness, and respect for self, others and the environment.  We encourage the children to eat their “grow food” (food that helps them grow bigger, smarter and stronger) before consuming dessert items, flavored chips, gummies, or other items containing refined sugars, colors, and processed ingredients.  Children who bring candy in their lunches will be asked to save it for the ride home; we request that candy not be included in children's lunches.

We encourage families to send lunches from home which are as simple, and as “grow food” oriented as possible, and to consider sending lunch items in reusable containers to minimize waste and garbage.  Highly respected children's pediatrician and author Dr. William Sears defines “grow food” as “foods from nature, not from the factory”.

Some examples of “grow food” lunch choices include one serving from each food group (dairy, protein, grain, vegetable, and fruit):

* Any and all fruits and vegetables, preferably raw.  Carrots, apples can be sent     whole, or other items can be cut up and served with dip/dressings which can be     fun for children and add interest.
* Beans (black, chili, refried...)
* Sandwiches with peanut (or any nut) butter and jelly, sandwich meats and or cheeses, tuna salad
* Yogurt or cottage cheese
* Avocados (can be cut in half, seed removed, cut in the peel and served with a     spoon to scoop it out.)
* Raw nuts (such as almonds, pistachios, mixed...) and seeds (pumpkin, sunflower...)
* Whole grain pasta with olive oil or pesto

Good nutrition is an important stepping stone for many reasons.  We have observed anecdotally and scientific research has also shown that diets high in whole grains and the phytonutrients in dark colored fruits and vegetables are “brain boosters” and they help the body sustain energy throughout the day.  On the other hand diets high in white, refined sugars and flours cause the body's insulin levels to peak and fall dramatically; causing what is sometimes referred to as “sugar high” or “sugar crash”.    Nutritionists advise that children need about 50% of their diet in carbohydrates, but these should be healthy carbs (fruits, vegetables, whole grains etc), that provide both protein and/or fiber.

Foods high in refined sugars and flours as well as certain food additives and colors have also been proven to have a profound effect on some children's energy, behavior, and ability to focus.  Several studies have shown that removing these ingredients from the child's diet, can reduce or eliminate ADD, aggression, and violent behaviors as well as mood swings and fluctuations in energy throughout the day.

A child's day at the Kiva is filled with opportunities for learning through activities inside and outside the classroom.  Children are asked to attain a certain level of concentration focus, and calm during the work period and line/group activities.   We also provide three unstructured, vigorous “outside time” periods.  During these periods, children freely explore, play, create, and absorb essential fresh air and vitamin D.  We believe that healthy food, and time in the fresh air, helps children to be successful in their day at the Kiva, by providing sustained energy for the growth and exploration we encourage in every aspect of our day.