Take-Home Compost Plan

Materials:

- small to medium paper bag
- craft materials to decorate bag (ie. paint, markers, sticker, feather, pom poms, etc)
- using decorations from nature, such as leaves, flowers, pebbles, etc, or materials that would have otherwise been thrown out or recycles, would be a good way to promote upcycling

Steps:

Part 1: Take-Home Compost

1. Have children decorate their take-home compost bags.
    a. Children can decorate with images of things that belong in the compost, inspired by compost, or however they wish.
2. Have the children take home their compost bag overnight or over the course of the weekend. Encourage them to involve their parents/guardians in collecting/deciphering food waste that belongs in the compost.
    a. Sending home a small note of what to and what not to compost may be helpful.
    b. Encourage students to compost mess-free food waste (ie. nothing liquidy or slimey).
    c. Have the students keep their composts in the freezer or fridge to avoid messes.
3. On the following day, or after the weekend, have the students bring their composts to class. Host an open discussion about what students composted and how their composting went.

a. This is an opportunity to discuss food waste and the processes associated with composting, such as decomposition by anaerobic bacteria.

Part 2: Class Mini Compost

*This part is encouraged but not necessary

1. Create a classroom compost using a medium sized bin or large tupperware.
    a. Ideally, you should use a transparent container so that students can watch the compost as it decomposes over time.
2. Optional: poke holes in the lid of the compost to help aerate the compost.
    a. Not poking lids would avoid unwanted smells in the classroom.
3. Have the students put the contents of their take-home composts into the mini class compost.
    a. If some students were unable to participate in the class compost, the class can go outside to gather dead leaves and other dead plants.
    b. Have students collect soil from outside to add to their compost.
4. Lightly water the compost mixture once all of the contents have been added to the bin.
5. Close the bin and allow it to sit.
6. Every fews days, open the compost to mix its contents with a small shovel. At this time open discussion about what is happening in the compost. This should likely be done outside to avoid smells in the classroom.
    a. Does it look different?
    b. Does it smell funny? If so, why?
    c. What looks like it is decomposing first? Why?

7. Repeat this step until you feel that the compost has decomposed and any changes are significant.
8. Have an open discussion about the compost to finish the experiment.
    a. What happened?
    b. Why does the compost look like soil now?
    c. Compare soil vs. compost?
    d. What decomposed the best? What took the longest?
    e. Why did the contents decompose?