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# Alabama's early childhood education conference hopes to inspire teachers

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Alabama's first annual Early Childhood Education Conference wrapped up Friday afternoon in Mobile, where nearly 3,000 educators, administrators, researchers, and caregivers spent two days networking and learning more about their field.

Prior to this year, the conference focused on the state's nationally-recognized First Class Pre-K program, conference manager Tara Skiles said, which serves 4-year-olds. The early childhood years, she said, go beyond one age and include birth through third grade

This is the first year the conference has expanded to include the full range of early childhood education.

Breakout sessions at the conference included clusters for infant and toddler teachers, pre-K teachers, administrators of public and private early childhood programs, as well as Kindergarten through third-grade public school teachers, she said.

Skiles manages teacher training for the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education and said the conference is geared toward educators and professionals who work with young children.

Everything from legal issues to social and emotional learning to mental health for young children was taught during the sessions, the department's Senior Director Tracye Strichik said.

Addressing mental health issues in young children is important, Strichik said. "Teachers don't have strategies to deal with a lot of our children who are experiencing trauma," she said, which can result in teachers



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