How do children experience the process of school consolidation? 
A longitudinal study on change of interpersonal relationship

Yasuyuki Kaneko & Manabu Tsuzuki
(Shizuoka University) (Chuo University)

PURPOSE
Due to declining birth rate, a number of students in elementary school gradually has been decreased since 1980 in Japan. Recently educational policy of consolidating multiple schools into one school has been promoted by local government. The purpose of this study was to clarify changes in teacher relations and friendship in a school consolidation process. How do children experience the environmental change of school consolidation?

METHOD
Participants were 202 students of newly consolidated elementary school from three to six grader; 135 students of large school and 67 students of small school.
Large school and small school were located in the urban area of Tokyo, Japan. In this area, the number of children decreased due to the doughnut effect.
Participants answered a sheet of questionnaire by three times during first academic year after school consolidation; April and October in 2012, and March in 2013. Teacher-student relations, Friend relations and School adjustment were examined by student's four points scale evaluation.

RESULTS
Three groups were divided by differences in school adjustment score. After school consolidation, 1) School adaptation decreasing group (N=57), 2) School adaptation does not changing group (N=48), 3) School adaptation increasing group (N=63).
Three-way ANOVA (Time (3) × School(2) × School adjustment type(3)) revealed a statistically significant interaction between time and school adjustment type (p<.01).
(Teacher-student relations, Fig1)
In School adaptation decreasing group, teacher relations score declined. On the other hand, In School adaptation increasing group, teacher relations score increased and friendship score increased.
(Friend relations, Fig2)
In School adaptation increasing group, friend relations score increased.

DISCUSSION
It was revealed that there are cases where the student’s relationship with teachers and friends improves by rebuilding a new environment. Changes in the environment have revealed that there are children who can build new interpersonal relationships. Changes in the environment are suggested to be a chance for children to switch school life. Currently, consistent education from elementary school to junior high school is promoted in Japan. This aim is to try to make a change in the environment when going from elementary school to junior high school smaller. In other words, it is to smooth the environmental transition from elementary school to junior high school. But, it is thought that children's experience of a new environment also has the benefit of school adaptation.